

BEAUTY ON DISPLAY
PLATO AND THE CONCEPT OF THE *KALON*

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ABSTRACT

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A central concept for Plato is the *kalon* – often translated as the *beautiful, fine, admirable, or noble*. This dissertation shows that only by prioritizing dimensions of beauty in the concept can we understand the nature, use, and insights of the *kalon* in Plato. The concept of the *kalon* organizes aspirations to *appear* and be admired as beautiful for one's virtue. We may consider beauty superficial and concern for it vain – but what if it were also indispensable to living well? By analyzing how Plato uses the concept of the *kalon* to contest cultural practices of shame and honour regulated by ideals of beauty, we come to see not only the tensions within the concept but also how attractions to beauty steer, but can subvert, our attempts to live well.

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If the concept of beauty is to be more than the parroting of the long-familiar words “the object that is pleasing must be sensuous, must possess no imperfection, must delight us in a manner that is satisfying,” if the concept of beauty shall be fruitful and yield more than flimsy and wretched general propositions, then, my undemanding philosopher, it must be more than a device emblazoned on your title page. Beauty is a difficult, ponderous concept; it must be abstracted from many individual facts and descriptions, all of which cannot be collected, polished, ordered, and refined enough if we are to deliver from them an analysis of beauty in general; and yet precisely such an analysis is the final product of all individual phenomena.

Johann Gottfried Herder

Critical Forests: Fourth Grove, II.2

Coordinating the Kalon: A Critical Introduction

And to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life.
Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §19

“Ask a toad what beauty is, absolute beauty, the *to kalon*,” wrote Voltaire on the subject in his *Dictionnaire Philosophique* of 1764. “He will answer that it is his toad wife, with two large round eyes sticking out of her little head, a large and flat snout, a yellow belly, and a brown back.”¹ Such wit, as always, contains wisdom. Where few concepts have inspired abstract metaphysics or idealized psychologies and politics as Beauty, how we experience, feel and talk about beauty proves welcome. If Voltaire emphasized the familiar tendency to judge beautiful whatever one loves, his point was not primarily to espouse some version of relativism. This besotted toad is so parochial, oddly analytic, and, in a word, laughable that disquisitions on the nature of beauty might seem not a little ridiculous. Yet this is only because Voltaire meant to ridicule those philosophers who reinforce their own prejudices about beauty while pretending to a universal theory. “Consult, lastly, the philosophers,” he continued, “they will answer you with gibberish: they have something conforming to the archetype of beauty in essence, to the *to kalon*.” One such target was Shaftesbury, to whose broadly Platonist and Stoic theory of beauty Voltaire’s Greek *to kalon* unmistakably alluded; Shaftesbury himself subtitled an essay on “The Beautiful,” now compiled in his *Philosophical Regimen*, “*To Kalon*.” Johann Gottfried Herder took more direct aim

¹ Voltaire (2010): 53, trans. modified.

at how Shaftesbury, like his contemporaries, assimilated the 18th-century ideal of gentlemanly moral beauty to the *kalon*, locating in antiquity “the taste which in his day held sway at the court of Charles the Second” but which “must always transform the concept of the Greek word.”² This objection, as well as its target, indicates a long history of wondering how to relate beauty to a similar but distinct concept – the classical Greek concept *to kalon*. All parties to the worry were united, however, by a conviction that beauty matters centrally to human life and that we might learn something in this regard from ancient Greek concepts.

This dissertation analyzes the concept of the *kalon* in Plato and its primary role in his thinking about ethical development. The *kalon* is often translated as *beautiful*, *fine*, *admirable*, *honourable*, or *noble*. How can these opposing dimensions be brought together? I argue that the concept organizes the social context in which one learns to recognize and aspire to the beauty of virtue – to become and *appear beautiful* before the eyes of others. Prioritizing aesthetic dimensions of the concept reveals the problem – and insight – which inclines the trajectory of the concept in Plato, that attractions to beauty steer but can subvert our pursuits of a good life. By analyzing how Plato uses the concept of the *kalon* to negotiate this problem, I maintain, we make perspicuous certain tensions in our own concept of beauty.

§1 *The Kalon and the Dominant Approach*

This line of argument opposes some powerful tendencies of classical scholarship and philosophical reflection on beauty over the last several decades. Those of classical scholarship

² Herder (2002 / 1767): 47.

would seem to suggest that earlier worry how to reconcile the *kalon* with beauty has effectively been resolved, although the conviction which animated such worry is beginning to reemerge. Since the middle of the twentieth century and into our own, it has been argued or often simply assumed that the concept of the *kalon* is chiefly incongruous to beauty. This view is so familiar that it may fairly be called *the dominant approach*. It has considerable merit. The dominant approach begins from the observation that the range of the adjective *kalos* and its cognates, which name a chief value of ancient Greek ethics, politics, and aesthetics, is distinct from and broader than the range of the English *beautiful* and its near equivalents in other languages, such as *beau* and *bello*. In philosophical and poetic discourse, the term is used, like *beautiful*, to express admiration at and desire for attractive persons, faces, bodies, and characters. It praises, too, artifacts well-made, such as utensils, clothing, and weapons, often for their efficiency, and excellent artistic products, charming music and poetry, remarkable sculpture, skillful painting, elaborate embroidery and so forth. Obvious similarities are thought to end there. Unlike *beautiful*, the term *kalos* is not commonly applied to nature. Most importantly, its center of gravity lies in ethics. One of the most powerful terms of approbation, it commends admirable actions, states of character and mind, the virtues, and wisdom, the contrary of which are labeled *aischros*, whose sense of ‘ugly’ shades here into powerful reproach as ‘shameful.’ On these grounds a near consensus has emerged that the *kalon* in general, and so too for Plato (and Aristotle), designates primarily an ethical and non-aesthetic property quite distinct from beauty, and that its similarity to beauty is secondary, restricted to erotic or artistic contexts.

The dominant approach is manifest in and supported by conventions of translation. The most common strategy of translators and commentators, in their turn, is to translate *kalon* by *fine*

due to its comparable and comparably wide range of referents, if somewhat blander sense. Paul Woodruff explains his widely influential choice of this strategy in his seminal translation of and commentary on Plato's, or if spurious the clearly Platonic, *Hippias Major*, which pursues the question what is the *kalon*:

Like beauty, *to kalon* is something splendid and exciting; and in women or boys it is the loveliness that excites carnal desire. But the use of *kalos* for that quality is embraced by its use as a quite general term of commendation in Greek. "Noble," "admirable," and "fine" are better translations, and of these "fine" is best of all in virtue of its great range. Different sorts of things are commended as *kala* for different sorts of qualities: boys for their sex appeal, horses for their speed, fighting cocks for their spunk, families for their lineage, acts of war for their courage, speeches for their truth, and so on. Our "beautiful" translates *kalos* in only a few of its many uses, and is wholly inappropriate for the word as Socrates uses it. (Woodruff (1982): 110)

Whether it is appropriate to suggest that beauty and the term *beautiful* relate centrally to 'the loveliness that excites *carnal* desire,' Socrates and Hippias can certainly seem to be discussing something quite different from beauty as they enlist examples of the *kalon* in virtuous customs and laws, splendid burials for one's parents and oneself, or whatever is good (*agathon*). And although, or perhaps because, their inconclusive attempts to define the *kalon* resemble how one might speak about beauty – as what is appropriate, beneficial or good, and pleasing through sight and hearing, for example – one might wish to show that the dialogue is more than "a disappointing treatise in aesthetics" and rather "an interesting inquiry into the foundation of all sorts of value judgments" (xiii).

This opposition and hierarchy of inquiries, like the passing reference to beauty, reflects certain philosophical assumptions about beauty and about the nature of aesthetics and its relationship to ethics. The assumption which predominates recent discussion of the *kalon* is that the aesthetic dimensions of the concept, captured by beauty, are distinct from its ethical

significance. Thus, Christopher Janaway maintains that while *kalos* “applied to persons and physical things has a central meaning to do with visual attractiveness,” one must remember that it is “more like ‘noble,’ ‘admirable,’ or ‘fine’” so that one does not run “the risk of over-aestheticizing Plato” and misconstrue his “ultimate aspiration as purely aesthetic.” We are not told at all what such a risk or an aspiration would involve; their sense is supposed clear and shared: “The aesthetic quality” – presumably ‘purely aesthetic’ – “which we call ‘beauty’ is one aspect of fineness, although it is not always separately noticed or valued” (Janaway (1995): 59). The significance of this last clause will emerge; for the moment simply notice it repeats the view of Julius Moravcsik that “what we call beautiful is for the Greeks ‘fine in appearance’” ((1982): 31). And although David Konstan has recently shown that, on the contrary, the related noun *kállos* overlaps considerably with ‘what we call beautiful,’ his extensive lexical survey remains thoroughly conventional in its conclusion that *kalos* and its substantive form *to kalon* have a “basic sense of *fine* or *excellent*” which suggests beauty only “when applied to physical appearance” ((2014): 39; equated with “prettiness” at 88). Sir Kenneth Dover had proposed much the same in his widely cited study of what he termed ‘Greek popular morality,’ questionably in contrast to ‘philosophy,’ that simply because it commends actions, behavior, and achievements, “*kalos* thus most often corresponds to our ‘admirable,’ ‘creditable’ and ‘honourable’” ((1974): 70).

These statements are representative. It is noticeable that such interpretations tend self-consciously to avoid points of similarity between the *kalon* and beauty, though without much explanation of what exactly they mean to avoid and why. For such negative procedures underscore that interpretation of the *kalon* proceeds primarily with reference to the concept of beauty. And, again, with good reason: obvious similarities abound, yet so do obvious initial

differences. Perhaps the current custom means, consciously or not, to correct an earlier identification of the *kalon* with beauty made by the likes of Shaftesbury and other early modern moral and aesthetics theorists. If this is the case, one might well wonder whether there has not been an over-correction. Yet whatever the case may be, even the cursory survey above already betrays other forces at work. For the dominant approach tends to distinguish the *kalon* from beauty by restricting the latter to a supposedly 'purely' aesthetic value as opposed to an ethical one, which it correlates either with "disinterested pleasure," taken especially in "works of art, independently of any further use or benefit" (Irwin (2010): 385; Janaway (1995): 62), or with the more questionable species of 'physical appearance' and the 'carnal.' This pattern of reasoning reveals more about some contemporary associations of beauty than it can about the *kalon*. Moreover, and in consequence, it cannot begin to address the substantial nature, range of connections, and theoretical functions of the *kalon* for Plato. How is the concept deployed? Which convictions impel its dominant roles in his thinking from ethics, aesthetics, and politics to metaphysics and epistemology? In which cultural and philosophical problems is it rooted and to which is it addressed? The dominant approach has, if anything, helped an impression that much here is settled, that we know our way about the *kalon*, let alone its relationship to beauty, when, I believe, we do not. We are presented a menu of translations but subsist on a poor diet of questions.

One immediate question is whether the ethical application of the *kalon* implies an incongruity to beauty. Against the presumption that it does a two-pronged reply suggests itself. The first prong looks toward the present. It denies that *beautiful* applies more narrowly than the *kalon*. Mary Mothersill maintains, for example, that the "analogously wide range" of *kalos*

presents a “*good* match for the English ‘beautiful’” ((1983): 251). Interested in restoring beauty to the principal regulative or ‘standing’ concept of aesthetics, Mothersill is under no obligation to answer the charge that the analogy does not extend to ethical contexts. Exercised by this charge, some classical scholars have rightly remarked the rich aesthetic vocabulary by which we, too, praise actions as ‘beautiful’ for their delicacy and imagination, for hitting upon just the right solution to a difficult problem, just as we try not behave in an ‘unseemly,’ ‘offensive,’ or ‘ugly’ manner and strive to be and to be around people whose ‘graceful’ habits or ‘lovely’ characters bring delight and admiration. If we do, the argument goes, *beautiful* is an unobjectionable and indeed the most appropriate translation of *kalon*. It will seem “a strength of Aristotle’s ethical theory,” where recent debate has focused, “that he recognizes the beauty of virtuous behaviour – a strength that lies below the surface if *kalon* is rarely translated ‘beautiful’” (Kraut (2013): 246).³

Linguistic use and intuitions differ, however. And while such aesthetic dimensions of ethical life may tell against drawing a stark border between these values, one might reply that such extensions of ‘beautiful’ are merely metaphorical or analogical and, like ethical uses of *kalon*, distinct from beauty *per se*. This thought, though seldom articulated, moves many to accept the testimony of the standard English-Greek lexicon, that *kalon* has at least two different senses, though few, of course, are willing follow its authors’ tellingly old-fashioned idiom of ‘moral

³ See also Richardson Lear (2010) and, for this argumentative strategy, Hyland (2008): 5, Riegel (2011): ch. 1 and Sachs (2005): xxi-xxii. C.C.W. Taylor offers this weaker, negative comment on his translation of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* II-IV: “to be *kalon* is to be attractive, to be such as to provide an incentive to choice and action via such emotional attitudes as love, admiration, and emulation. It is this failure to capture that aspect that is what is basically wrong with the suggestion... that *kalon* should be translated ‘right’. That rendering does indeed capture the fundamental normativity of the concept, but at the price of severing its links with the emotions and aesthetic responses” ((2006): 89n).

beauty' to denote beauty 'in a moral sense.'⁴ A second prong of argument is needed therefore to meet the dominant approach, one which looks toward the past.

The second prong denies that *kalon*, despite its wide range, has an aesthetic sense distinct from an ethical or even *moral* one. This presumption is not only prejudicial, it will be noted, but in fact false – at least so far as Platonic usage is concerned.⁵ To cite but one exemplary passage, a programmatic statement of acculturation in the *Republic*, Socrates shows no sign of switching between aesthetic, ethical or, for that matter, social senses when he insists that only if one learns to take pleasure in graceful expressions of the *kalon* in poetry, music, architecture, and other arts will one learn to recognize and love the most *kalon*, *kallista*, sight of a virtuous person and to act “for the sake of *kala* ends” (*tōn kalōn charin*, *Rep.* 403b6).⁶ Otherwise, one will pursue pleasure indecently and beauty indecorously; the example is, notably, unchaste sexual behavior in the context of pederastic courtship. And failing to act for such *kalon* ends, which Shorey understandably renders ‘noble,’ one will show oneself and be reproached for being uncultured, literally ‘unmusical,’ *amousias*, and ‘inexperienced in beauty,’ *apeirokalias* (403c1-2). It is not quite that Socrates moves more seamlessly than we do between aesthetic and ethical contexts or that he assumes a strong correspondence or close continuity between them. Rather, he does not make these distinctions at all.

⁴ LSJ *s.v.* *kalos* III.2.

⁵ See, e.g., Richardson Lear (2006a): esp. 105 and with attention to the *Laws*, Moss (2012). On the sense of *kalon* in Aristotle, see Irwin (2010) and the rather differently oriented study of Kraut (2013).

⁶ Translations of Plato are my own throughout. Those of other sources almost always follow, with modifications, standard Loeb editions or editions made available through the Perseus Digital Project.

To maintain that he does is additionally distortive given the privilege Socrates accords erotic desire in the process of becoming virtuous and happy. This central role precludes a difference in kind between attraction to beauty on the one hand and some properly ethical motivation on the other. If the scheme of early education of the *Republic*, like its criticisms of mimetic poetry, impress this point, it will perforce be impressive when we recall that ‘ultimate aspiration’ prescribed in Socrates’s speech in the *Symposium*. The process by which one is to channel erotic desire from manifestations of the *kalon* in bodies to its manifestations in souls, laws, sciences, and ultimately to the wondrous ‘form’ of the *kalon* itself seems to presuppose that, for Plato, the term *kalon* has one common sense in agency and philosophical comprehension.⁷ But insofar as this sense strongly suggests beauty, it becomes only more perplexing.

If the dominant approach will not do, therefore, neither will a translation of ‘beautiful’ across all instances. Not now because actions, characters, lives and virtues cannot be called ‘beautiful,’ nor because an ‘aesthetic’ basis for ethical activity would have to mean fashioning one’s life as if it were a work of art or refusing “to commit mass murder because doing so would be tacky” (Kosman (2010): 344). It is nearer to the mark and correct to note that ethical praise in terms of beauty, though more robust and less dandyish than many incline to hear, is non-standard in a way that *kalon* in ethical discourse is not. As the passage above from the *Republic* shows, the latter praises not only outstanding deeds but also simply doing what is right or what conforms to social conventions.⁸ Yet neither does this reach the heart of the matter. Suppose we render Shorey’s ‘noble ends’ by ‘beautiful ends’ to evoke its immediate connection to music, poetry, and

⁷ See further the argument of Richardson Lear (2010): 359.

⁸ Well observed by Kosman (2010): 349-350.

other arts, where Shorey opts for ‘beautiful,’ also understandably. Or suppose we use ‘noble’ throughout or some hendiadys, ‘beautiful and noble’ or ‘beautiful and fine’; suppose we note that the Greek covers all, or none, of these. Still we would not know what it would mean to act for the sake of the *kalon* and why learning to do so should be central to learning to live a good and worthwhile life. Confusion over the semantics of *kalon* reflects, as well as conceals, a deeper and far knottier problem.

§2 *A Conceptual Problem*

“The really interesting and hard work remains to be done,” notes Aryeh Kosman in a singularly insightful discussion, “the work required when we go beyond the facile use of ‘beautiful’ here and ‘fine’ there.” For our problem does not concern the translation of a word, however often it is presented as such. It concerns a *concept*. Once we move from the level of lexical to the level of conceptual analysis, from philological to philosophical considerations, the fundamental question becomes: “What is the shape of such a concept, able to contain all these disparate and self-conflicting features?” (Kosman (2010): 352)

It is not unreasonable to think, with Kosman, that this is the sort of ‘what is X?’ question worked out in and through the Platonic dialogues. More peculiar is it to orient Platonic inquiry from the suspicion that evaluative concepts contain ‘disparate and self-conflicting features.’ This is a bold and incisive hypothesis. We shall see the *kalon* in Plato bear it out especially nicely, but its initial appeal may perhaps already be clear. One reason why the concept of the *kalon* is confounding is because it is a cluster concept. It contains various dimensions which make it impossible to classify what falls under the concept according to individually necessary and jointly

sufficient conditions. This is not to deny that Plato uses the term in a single aesthetic-cum-ethical sense. Nonetheless, a motif in the dialogues, evident in the discernment of a ‘great sea of beauty’ in the *Symposium* (τὸ πολὺ πέλαγος ... τοῦ καλοῦ, *Symp.* 210d) but more so in the *Hippias Major*, is the sheer diversity of what is *kalon* and what makes it so. It is plausible to think that some items, like laws, are *kalon* because they are beneficial to human beings; others, like music, pleasurable to the ear or, like mathematics, the intellect; and still others, like chaste conduct in aristocratic pederasty or, more familiarly, fancy golden soup spoons, appropriate to social expectations and status relations (*cf. Hip. Mai.* 290d).

These conditions are not mutually exclusive, however. There lies part of our difficulty. The concept of the *kalon* itself pushes our inquiry in several directions. Such disparate features explain why what is *kalon*, worthy of admiration and pursuit, causes the greatest “strife and contention” (ἔσθιν καὶ μάχην, *Hip. Mai.* 294d2) between different communities and between individuals within a community.⁹ Yet what is more important, and more interesting, is that characteristic features of the concept themselves also pull in opposite directions. To put the point quite generally, because it is internally connected but not reducible both to pleasure *and* to the good, to enchanting and sometimes harmful experiences *and* to independent standards of wellbeing, the concept of the *kalon* embodies a profound tension in the cultural imagination and evaluative landscape of classical Athens. These self-conflicting features pass unremarked when the concept is parceled neatly into something ‘aesthetic’ and something ‘ethical,’ sliding silently over the difficulty of asking how, if at all, the whole was robust enough to hang together.

⁹ The following three chapters will examine such contention in some detail.

Silence on this score does speak volumes, however, about how feeble beauty has been supposed to be by contrast. The dominant approach, we saw, presupposes some conception or other of beauty to mark its incongruence to the *kalon*. A complementary difficulty involved in trying, as usual, to elucidate a lesser known concept by one better known (even if by contrasting them) is that the case with beauty is far from clear. It is itself, notoriously, a contested concept, one, it would seem, more often anxiously avoided than understood. It is noteworthy that scholarly treatment of the *kalon* over the last several decades has coincided with, and drawn momentum from, wider and deeper cultural currents which swept beauty to the margins of philosophical aesthetics and effectively out of contemporary art-making. These currents were well underway when in 1951 John Passmore diagnosed “The Dreariness of Aesthetics” in terms of its arid construction of general principles, not least on the back of an irrelevant and insidious concept of beauty. “There is something suspect (‘phony’) about ‘beauty’,” he objected and as the Dada, the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, Abstract Expressionist, and Pop Art movements had revealed, “artists seem to get along quite well without it: it is the café-haunters, the preachers, the metaphysicians, and the calendar-makers who talk of beauty.” Beauty had become inessential not only to the production but also to the appreciation of art; the etchings of Goya, Joyce’s *Ulysses* or for that matter, to update the example, anything by Damien Hirst, would not naturally be called ‘beautiful.’ Passmore’s point deepened when he suggested why not: beauty is “always nice; always soothing” – but far from innocent. Socially speaking, “it is what the bourgeoisie pay the artist for”; philosophically speaking, “the refuge of the metaphysician finding a home for art in his harmonious universe, attempting to subdue its ferocity, its revelations of deep-seated conflict... by ascribing to it a ‘Beauty’ somehow akin to goodness” (Passmore (1951): 331).

Passmore did not elaborate; he did not need to, so powerful was the ‘abuse of beauty’ in the twentieth century, as Arthur Danto and others have discussed.¹⁰ His choice phrases, however, condense two general moral and political objections to how the concept of beauty is currently instantiated, worth mentioning to place the dominant approach, and the problem of rehabilitating beauty, in broader context. The first objection is that the concept of beauty has been and remains a vehicle of exclusion. Though most conspicuous in art history, with avant-garde artists rejecting the ideal to expand the definition of what could count as (good) art, this history has a social and political character. Excluded are those who do not have the luxury or material means to engage with ‘beautiful’ or ‘fine’ things in the ‘right’ way (disinterestedly?), whether a painting by Matisse, a lovely sunset stroll, or now, perhaps, a healthful avocado salad whose enjoyment is artfully curated on Instagram.¹¹ More sinister in this connection is how the concept of beauty, in tandem with concepts of order, harmony, or greatness, is abused to exclude certain people from political life and life itself; the geometry of the opening moments of Leni Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will* is a disturbing embodiment of this process. Closer to home, we know too well that the principal use of the concept in beautification – think of beautiful models advertising ‘beauty products’ for regimens at home or in ‘beauty salons’ – sells unjust and restrictive ideals of femininity and masculinity, and much else besides, with a covert promise of leading ‘the good life.’

Here the second objection takes hold, that, so constructed, the experience of beauty prevents one from rectifying the very injustices it reinforces. If beauty is merely soothing, the

¹⁰ Danto (2003). Other valuable studies include Steiner (2001) and Prettejohn (2005): esp. ch. 4.

¹¹ On the concept of taste in this connection, see Bourdieu (1984).

thought is, it cannot spur social or political action and insulates or distances one from the rather ugly conditions of the actual world; Passmore's metaphysician is in this way complicit in a falsehood at once metaphysical and moral. From the perspective of the first objection, to protest that beauty necessarily allies justice by inspiring "a lifesaving reciprocity" between people will seem not simply naïve but uncritical.¹² Such niceties conspire to obscure a darker side. A more promising reply might be to move beauty closer to the center of our thinking about aspiration and agency, as we shall find with the *kalon* in Plato, and to emphasize that changes in how beauty is perceived and desired depends on changes in concrete institutions in which its norms are embedded. My intent is not to address either objection, however, but rather to note their bearing on the task at hand.

These broader considerations help to explain why scholars have lately been quick to assume that aspects of beauty in the *kalon* are irrelevant, even contrary, to its ethical role. So too do they exacerbate the difficulty of finding our way about the ancient concept, insofar as that process requires thinking about beauty, however minimally or superficially. At the same time, such historical and philosophical considerations suggest a route forward. Although the above moral and political objections – clustered around the nature of beauty as *appearance* – are traditionally marshaled toward a *disanalogy* with the *kalon*, they in fact point in the opposite direction. I would suggest that its history of contestation and internally conflicted tendencies reflect that the concept of beauty is in the first instance *structurally* analogous to the concept of the *kalon*. The extent to which this analogy is apt or illuminating, I trust, will emerge as we

¹² So, Scarry (1999): 95 in her admirable, though in my view too forceful, attempt to repair connections between values of beauty, justice, and truth. See for a historical echo Schiller (2004 / 1793): 135-138, §27.

examine how Plato employs the *kalon* to reconfigure which sorts of character, and the cultural images which glorify them, are and should be admired and emulated. For this critical project begins from the fact that the concept of the *kalon* organizes a communal sense of how one should live, and that this sense – the aesthetic vocabulary is deliberate – becomes reinforced as one aspires to be admired as *kalon* in aspiring to become virtuous. If, as I shall argue, this social psychology depends essentially on what *seems kalon*, with all the ambivalence of this term implied, there is in a second instance a *substantive* analogy with the concept of beauty. In which case only by rehabilitating aesthetic dimensions of the *kalon* will we understand how Plato articulates the concept and the problems which animate its role in his thinking. If too narrow, one-sided, or enfeebled a conception of beauty has strained comprehension in this area, the structural and substantive analogies I shall pursue stand to shift our attention to its robust if problematic role in ethical and social motivation. To ask at this moment after the *kalon* is thus to renew the old question of its potential insights for a concept of beauty.

It is worth emphasizing that this argumentative strategy presupposes a great distance between the two concepts. If I have emphasized so far what have been overlooked points of congruence between the *kalon* and beauty, it has not been to elide the important and widely recognized incongruities. Indeed, it is only by recognizing these incongruities, however exaggerated they may sometimes be, that analyzing the concept of the *kalon* could possibly cast an angle of light on contemporary notions of beauty. The idea that aspects of beauty may cast fresh light on the *kalon* would, similarly, not have sense otherwise. Neither result could of course justify the claim that the two concepts are importantly congruent. But the hope of either possibility is a helpful reminder, against the charge of anachronism, that our conceptual

landscape may be enriched only because and only after we first run up against the limits of comprehending the rather different terrain in which we find the *kalon*. This is a banal point of hermeneutics, of course. But its essential lesson is this: articulating these limits does not leave them in the same place. The boundaries are redrawn as we deepen our familiarity with both classical Greek values and our own.

It is not without irony that the difference between the *kalon* and beauty has been emphasized when underlying reasons for and expressions of that difference have not. This is plausibly because the question of concepts is not always placed to the fore. Though a truism, it bears repeating that the concept of the *kalon* lived at home in distant cultural practices and institutions – twice I have had to mention *paiderastia* – and was integral to a constellation of concepts, values, and problems rather different than ‘our’ own. If it is therefore mistaken to impose on our ancient sources an anachronistic division of aesthetics and ethics, it is also mistaken to beg interesting questions about potential discontinuities by presuming that when Homer, Thucydides, Sophocles’ *Antigone*, Plato, or Aristotle called a courageous death *kalon*, they found *beauty* in places where we (think we) do not.¹³ How, then, are we to orient ourselves

¹³ Among other instances, see Hom. *Il.* 22. 71-6, Tytr. 10. 1-2, Soph. *Ant.* 72, Pl. *Alc. I*, 115ab, Ari. *NE* 1168a33-1169a20. Compare Tatarkiewicz ((1972): 165): “The Greek concept of beauty was broader than ours, extending not only to beautiful things, shapes, colors and sounds but also to beautiful thoughts and customs,” presupposing that the *kalon* is a concept of beauty, though somewhat paradoxically, one ‘broader than ours.’ The conceptual issue is well observed by Kosman (2010): 344 and, more generally, Gadamer (1989), whose notion of a ‘fusion of horizons’ has helped to clarify my thought. The air of paradox could be dissolved through a genealogy of the concept of beauty, tracing what would be shown to be its transformations across historical contexts. The remark of Herder’s quoted as the epigraph to this dissertation is apposite here, if only as a promissory note.

with respect to the *kalon*? This methodological problem has not, to my mind, been sufficiently addressed.

The first mistake, I have argued, colors the dominant approach. The first prong of reply to that approach, which finds the translation *beautiful* appropriate to ancient ethics, can run dangerously close to the second, in its own way a version of anachronism. The hermeneutic challenge is not to abandon contemporary categories to make sense of ancient sources (we cannot do the first, and if we could, could not do the second) but to refine our categories as we seek to align them imperfectly with one or several foreign categories, working back and forth between similarities and differences and exposing deeper ones to view. But from where do we begin? Significantly, much philosophical discussion of the *kalon*, by proponents and opponents of the dominant approach alike, operates under the assumption that one should proceed from abstract concepts which can, supposedly, unite diverse contexts at a necessarily great level of generality, their highest common denominators — ‘if not *beauty*, then *fineness*, *admirability*, *nobility*...’ The level of abstraction may be seen in how tortured some of these alternatives seem and how unmeaningful are others; hence they can all be brought out indifferently.¹⁴ A surer indication is a general omission in studies of the *kalon* in Plato, to my knowledge, of historically specific

¹⁴ This is not to deny that translations of ‘fine’, ‘noble’, and the like are useful and acceptable. The point is just that they cannot be terribly illuminating if the concepts to which they advert are either theoretically constructed, like *fineness*, or, like *nobility*, detached from the historical conditions in which they emerged. The latter would explain why it has not seemed compulsory to ask, as with beauty, how nobility relates to the *kalon*, to what extent, for example, its connection to chastity is misleading or whether at issue in the *kalon* is anything like, say, the feud between the *noblesse de robe* and the *noblesse d’épée* in Revolutionary France. Richard Kraut notes a fundamental question oddly taken for granted as affirmed: “What is this nobility or fineness that (according to excellent scholars and translators) plays so large rôle in Aristotle’s way of thinking about the motivation of good people? Do we understand these notions?” ((2013): 249).

associations, practices, and attitudes that give shape and substance to the concept and orient its trajectory in Plato.

My hope is to clarify this vexed subject by adopting an alternative approach, first and foremost situating the concept in its, and Plato in his, broader cultural contexts – intellectual, social, and material. The following chapters pursue this direction to show the constitution and internal tensions of the concept by revealing, as I indicated, how Plato uses it to reconfigure cultural patterns of esteem – prominent conceptions of the *kalon* – and to liberate the pursuit of what he terms a virtuous and flourishing ‘philosophical’ life. Indeed, as we shall see, this methodological turn is required by the very nature of the *kalon* as a distinctly social value: communal transactions of the *kalon* shape the sort of life one wants to be admired for living, the terms on which one strives to be and to *appear kalon* before others. This is the primary claim I shall try to establish. A secondary claim is that what this means and what are its implications and stakes will become clearest if we emphasize stresses and strains of beauty.

But this is to come. For the moment notice two challenges that confront any approach which emphasizes the historicity of the *kalon* and therefore its difference to the history of the concept of beauty. These are challenges to the prospect of orienting ourselves to the *kalon* in general, which gain particular force given the structure of my argument. Both can be generated by considering how the *Republic* passage to which I adverted fuses what we call aesthetic and ethical concerns. Each lies behind considerations of the dominant approach – now advanced to the proposal that the *concepts* of beauty and the *kalon* are chiefly incongruous.

On the one hand, the concept of beauty has been inflected since the 18th-century by the concept of ‘the aesthetic,’ interlocked with such concepts as art, the fine arts, taste, and nature,

with which the *kalon* could not have been related. On the other hand, the concept of the *kalon* relates centrally to ethical concepts of shame and honour considered largely absent from modern moral culture, *a fortiori* from a modern concept of beauty. With what significance?

A long and venerable tradition takes the first fact to show that the ancient Greeks in general, and Plato in particular, did not possess a concept of beauty at all. This position owes to a developmental narrative according to which full possession of a concept of beauty comes, properly speaking, only with the achievement of a self-conscious and autonomous realm of ‘aesthetic’ experience, be it a realm of imaginative experience, as in the case of Croce’s ‘true aesthetic,’ or, following Kant, of ‘pure’ and ‘disinterested’ judgment.¹⁵ This narrative bears primarily on the difficult question whether, or in which sense, one may legitimately speak of aesthetics in antiquity; yet by assimilating the concept beauty to the aesthetic, one yields judgments as to whether, or to what extent, one may legitimately speak of beauty. It is the Kantian strain of this narrative which led Janaway, we may recall, to qualify that the *kalon* captures beauty as an aspect of fineness, but one “not always separately noticed or valued” as such. More influential in this area is the now infamous statement of Paul Oskar Kristeller in the first of his classic two-part essay, “The Modern System of the Fine Arts,” that ancient thinkers “were neither able nor eager to detach the aesthetic quality of these works of art from their intellectual, moral, or religious and practical function or content” ((1951): 506). Kristeller does occasionally associate beauty with this supposedly detachable but undefined aesthetic quality and, on this basis, denies that in Greco-Roman antiquity beauty carried “its specific modern connotations.” However, he is

¹⁵ See Croce (1995 / 1911): esp. 156-66 on Greco-Roman antiquity; Vico marks the watershed of his history. Compare Bosanquet (1892).

more careful than is often appreciated to recognize that whether we speak of ancient *aesthetics* depends upon “our definition of that term” but does *not* depend upon the issue which concerns him, that the core group or ‘system’ of (fine) art(s) – painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and poetry – had not crystallized before the eighteenth century (499-500).

More careful, for while Kristeller uses the key term ‘aesthetics’ in connection to philosophical reflection on the arts, he neither conflates aesthetics and philosophy of art nor defines one in terms of the other. From his historical claim, therefore, it does not follow that one cannot inquire meaningfully into a concept of beauty in Plato or into *aesthetic* aspects of the *kalon* as a contribution to *ancient* aesthetics. Of these Kristeller often stands accused. Yet, on the contrary, I would suggest that his strategy is more dialectical in the sense that the criteria by which one is initially inclined to characterize ‘the aesthetic’ are to be called into question, changed, or reversed by the course of argument. It cannot be denied that Kristeller expresses a certain modernist bias when he states what ancient thinkers were not ‘able’ to do, just as when he underestimates the coherence which the concept of *mimēsis* lent to ancient Greek arts and reflection upon them.¹⁶ So too is his erudition arguably least evident in his treatment of ancient sources and his sole focus on texts, indeed philosophical texts, too restricted and slanted to furnish such general conclusions. Nonetheless, his historical survey is precisely poised to challenge the dogma that the fine arts “constitute an area all by themselves, clearly separated by common characteristics from the crafts, the sciences and other human activities.” What might

¹⁶ As Halliwell (2002) has shown; see his balanced treatment of the Kristeller thesis at 7-14. Shiner (2009): 167 may overstate the case in claiming that Kristeller’s remark about ‘detachment’ “was cautioning against an over-hasty attribution of modern ideas of aesthetic experience to the ancients,” but recognizes that it does not preclude ancient aesthetics, as Porter (2010): ch. 1 uncharitably argues.

have seemed a failure on the part of ancient thinkers, in other words, may help to curb a modern tendency to “assign to ‘Art’ with a capital A that ever narrowing area of modern life which is not occupied by science, religion, or practical pursuits” (Kristeller (1951-52): 498). That critical note begins the essay. Kristeller returns to it in his conclusion, hopeful that tracing how this conception of art contingently formed might “free us from certain conventional preconceptions” and strengthen a “healthy reaction” already underway against “an aesthetic system based on a situation no longer existing.” Instead of an outmoded classification of the arts, indicative of an impoverished scheme of values, Kristeller welcomed a broader view of “Art and the aesthetic realm,” very much in the spirit of Dewey, whom he cites, “as a pervasive aspect of human experience” (Kristeller (1951-52): 46).

Despite initial appearances, then, Kristeller proves a surprising companion to the recent resurgence of what remains self-consciously called ‘ancient aesthetics.’ It is significant that this body of scholarship is growing precisely when philosophical energies are returning to the aesthetics of the ‘everyday’ and to the pervasive reach of beauty in ethical, social, and political life.¹⁷ These twin movements allow us to ask new questions, and older questions, of ancient sources. They also illuminate how the aesthetic is not a fixed but an open concept which has always been contested and in fact sometimes conceived with a retrospective glance to ‘the Greeks’ to enliven contemporary sensibilities. If my dialectical strategy has something of this spirit, it is in full awareness that it can be fruitful only on the basis of historical analysis, in this case, of one important strand of Plato’s thinking.

¹⁷ Ancient aesthetics: *e.g.*, Halliwell (2002) and (2011), Porter (2010), Peponi (2012), Sluiter and Rosen (2012), Destrée and Murray (2015). Wider scope of beauty: *e.g.*, Danto (2003) and Nehamas (2007*a*).

So if the connection of beauty to a philosophical discipline of aesthetics is not an insurmountable obstacle, the specific ethical register of the *kalon* in shame and honour remains challenging. The concept of the *kalon* brings ethical evaluation under the rubric of shame and honour by issuing a standard according to which actions, pursuits, and persons are worthy of widespread admiration and, correlatively, of widespread reproach for being *aischron*. This is the deal of truth in translations of *kalon* by ‘honourable,’ ‘noble,’ and ‘admirable,’ although at the cost of underemphasizing a fundamental aesthetic dimension. For central to this standard is the ethical weight placed on how actions will *look* or *seem* to oneself and to others.¹⁸ The following chapter will examine this point and some of its ambiguities in detail, but preliminarily we may say the following. To pursue and to evaluate action *as kalon* is to refer (in part) to what members of a community *should* admire, based on, though not reducible to, what members of this community *do* admire, what they think and say about which sort of life is worth living.

The weight of these broadly social considerations is considerable in an ethical context structured by concepts of honour (*timē*) and glory (*kleos*). Yet so is the insistence on what is intelligible to us as beauty. Consider the *mimetic* relation we find in Pindar between *kala erga*, deeds or works, and the beautiful work of the poet which memorializes these deeds and the poet himself:

We know of a mirror for *kalois* deeds [ἔργοις δὲ καλοῖς ἔσοπτρον] in only one way, if by the grace of Mnemosyne with the shining crown [λιπαράμπυκος], one finds a recompense for his labors in songs of praise [ἐπέων ἀοιδαῖς]. (N. 7.14-6)

Come, Muse, direct to that house a glorious wind of verses [οὔρον ἐπέων | εὐκλέα], because when men are dead and gone, songs and words preserve for them their *kala* deeds [τὰ καλά ἔργα]. (N. 6.28-30)

¹⁸ Dover (1974): 70-1 provides ample citations.

The analogy of the mirror, which would reflect in beautiful song the beauty of action, may be exceptional to the poetic context. But on the other hand, because the poet must draw on conventional notions of the *kalon* to be understood, these passages exemplify the need discussed earlier to hold together somehow, rather than to prise apart, familiar aspects of beauty and seemingly distinct points of ethical salience. The added difficulty in this area, what I called the second challenge, is that these points of salience can seem unfamiliar not only to our thinking about beauty but also to our thinking about ethics. We might think we do or should do without shame and honour. In which case, it will be one thing to assign beauty an ethical value but quite another, and quite perverse, to link that value to these attitudes. To the extent beauty fits this context, it may be said, it is the currency of vanity, that it is of no ethical concern and may be unethical to be moved by considerations of others admiring the beauty of one's action.

This thought will be particularly forceful in light of the specifically *moral* concepts, including autonomy, duty, and dignity, which preoccupy much contemporary ethical thinking. If, as Elizabeth Ascombe and Bernard Williams have emphasized, such concepts are absent or not prominent in ancient Greek ethics – concepts that purport to pick out a special sort of *moral* reasoning, rightness, responsibility, judgment, *etc.* – the attitudes surrounding the *kalon* require care to unravel.¹⁹ It seems to me an excellent question whether the *kalon* resists assimilation to specifically moral values precisely insofar as the concept fuses aesthetic and ethical ones. However, all that the terms of this question might implicate, and how we should address it adequately, lies beyond the scope of this study. I shall be content to have motivated the

¹⁹ Anscombe (1958) and Williams (1993). But see Irwin (2010) and (2011) for a rather different view and its bearing on the *kalon* in Aristotle.

possibility, and potential fruitfulness, of this question by locating the concept of the *kalon* in its proper philosophical and historical territory.

Here, then, lies the central crux of understanding the concept of the *kalon*. Once we recognize that the term has a single sense for Plato, once we recall the role of beauty in ethics, once we resist the tendency to disconnect intertwined aesthetic, ethical, and social dimensions of the concept, there is this hoariest of questions: how could an ethical value of beauty be tied to concern for the admiration or reproach of others?

This question presents rich possibilities, I propose, for recovering from Plato aspects of beauty suppressed by the dominant approach. Ordinarily, such a recovery would concentrate on the role of the *kalon* in the *Symposium* or *Phaedrus*, for example, which would fruitfully shift attention onto the beauty of persons, their actions, and lives in the education of desire. Yet such a shift, though quite welcome, would be comparatively straightforward because we already recognize beauty in the conceptual connection of the *kalon* to erotic desire. This much the dominant approach begins by conceding. For this reason, I begin from and concentrate on the role of the *kalon* in the ethical development of shame and honour in the *Republic*. To demonstrate the importance to this role of aesthetic dimensions of the *kalon* will be to meet more squarely the challenges with which it confronts us, and Plato, while casting in new light more familiar ethical, sociopolitical, and even metaphysical themes of this dialogue.

§3 *Overview*

In what follows, I demonstrate the scope, precision, and coherence of insights afforded by an approach to the Platonic *kalon* which prioritizes its ‘aesthetic’ dimensions – roughly, the

experiential presence and psychosomatic effects of things, *ta phainomena* – as part and parcel of its ethical and social function. Each of the following chapters show that the use and abuse of beautiful appearance underlies how Plato connects the concept of the *kalon* to cultural practices of shame and honour; to sensory pleasure, fascination, and wonder; and to erotic desire – all in pursuit of a good human life. One central intention of my argument is to reveal the problems that circumscribe the concept of the *kalon* and its role for Plato insofar as the *kalon* is a matter of appearance, indeed of beautiful, powerfully attractive appearance. This way lies what I consider a distinctive and fruitful insight of Plato's: that we cannot do without, and cannot marginalize as 'mere,' the order of beautiful appearances that steer, for good or for ill, the course of our shared ethical lives.

The following chapter, "Beauty, Shame, and the Appearance of Virtue," examines the foundational place of beauty in the regulative role of the *kalon* in acculturation in the *Republic*. Cultural images of beauty not only make a certain model of character and way of living seem attractive to pre-rational children, I argue, but structure ethically necessary senses of shame and honour. While it is often supposed that, according to Plato, shame and honour contribute to virtue only as far as these attitudes promote psychic harmony through self-esteem, but not as they concern the esteem of others, shame and honour presuppose collective identities in which this distinction dissolves. These collective identities revolve around a shared sense of what is *kalon* – beautiful, let us begin to say – against which one aspires to *appear* and be admired as beautiful for one's virtue. The ethical significance of the *kalon*, and thus shame and honour, redounds to a *public* conception of virtue. Accordingly, I argue, motivation for the *kalon* is captured far less well

by modern emphases on private virtue and moral and aesthetic autonomy and far better by the dynamics of beauty in socialized modes of self-presentation.

If the concept of the *kalon* organizes the public context in which one learns to recognize and aspire to the beauty of virtue, then cultural conceptions of beauty will tend to reinforce themselves by this social psychology. Exercised by the worry that spurious conceptions will reinforce themselves and hinder the proper pursuit of virtue, Plato employs the concept of the *kalon* as a philosophical antidote. The next two chapters develop the argument of the previous by demonstrating how, primarily in the *Republic* though also elsewhere, Plato contests prominent cultural ideals of beauty in order to liberate what he is crafting as a distinctly ‘philosophical’ pursuit. Chapter 3, “Glory, Grief, and the Problem of Achilles,” focuses on the refinement of a defective and dangerous mode of honour made attractive by the figure of Achilles and the ideal of a glorious death. Plato strategically disgraces the figure of Achilles, I show, to redefine the nature and proper object of honour and to undermine a fundamentally tragic worldview that renders human flourishing impossible.

If this redefinition of the *kalon* takes aim at the structure of its social motivations, Chapter 4, “Putting *Poikilia* in its Place,” takes aim at the most fundamental mode of sensibility it organizes. It is customary to note that Plato valorizes norms of simplicity and unity across his aesthetics, ethical psychology, politics, and, of course, metaphysics of ‘forms.’ This chapter demonstrates that these norms work to displace an aesthetic sensibility which delights in ‘fascinating variegation,’ an aesthetics of *poikilia* expressed in archaic and classical arts and politics. Plato seeks to undermine its analytic connection between *poikilia* and beauty (*kallos*, to *kalon*) to reorient attention and attraction toward the intelligible and unitary nature of beauty.

Against this historical background, we may see that Plato does not, as is widely claimed, unequivocally deny the beauty of *poikilia* or the value of its sensory excitation, especially in worrisomely ‘variegated’ poetry. Rather, his more multifaceted treatment reflects an irresolvable dilemma that fascination in beauty can be edifying or lead to our demise.

The ambivalent character of beauty complicates its relation to the good, the theme of Chapter 5, “The Guise of the Beautiful.” This final chapter carries forward the central lesson of Plato’s negotiation of charming *poikilia* in the *Republic* into an analysis of erotic desire in the *Symposium*. The overarching conceptual connection of the *kalon* to the good, *agathon*, now becomes focal. There is a tendency to believe, because the *kalon* is clearly closely related to the good in this dialogue and elsewhere, that Plato identifies or seamlessly correlates beauty and the good. Focusing on an exemplary passage often taken to support this view, and explicating its significance for this theme in the dialogue as a whole, I show that Plato in fact emphasizes the distinct roles of beauty and the good in the psychology of erotic desire to emphasize the worry, from the lived perspective of agents, that the pursuit of beauty may fail to conduce to one’s life going well. To the extent that our attempts to live well are motivated ‘under the guise of the beautiful,’ human agency remains risky, uncertain, and blind.

By restoring priority to dimensions of beauty in the Platonic *kalon*, then, we may develop a fuller account of the ethical role and social context of the concept, its range of historical connections, and the depth of philosophical problems which circumscribe it. To speak of depth in this connection is, at the same time, to gesture toward philosophical insights which this articulation of the *kalon* may present to contemporary reflection on the concept of beauty. If the

analogy with beauty is meaningful, we may recover a richer sense of the pervasive and deeply ambivalent roles of beauty in our shared ethical lives.

Beauty, Shame, and the Appearance of Virtue

Those Greeks were superficial – out of profundity!
Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Preface §4

§1 *Our Ancient Contemporaries*

A crux of understanding the concept of the *kalon* is how its suggestions of beauty relate to its role in ethical evaluation and motivation. This difficulty becomes most acute when Plato organizes the cultural scheme of the *Republic* by the aim of inculcating desire for the *kalon*. Through beautiful images in poetry, music, and other arts, he has Socrates insist, pre-rational children must learn to recognize and to love what is *kalon*. Significantly, to love what is *kalon* is to act “for the sake of *kalon* ends” (*Rep.* 403b6), lest one be “reproached as uncultured and inexperienced in beauty” (c1-2). The question of this chapter is what this means and why it is central to an education to virtue.

There is a task for explanation because we are unsure how to align considerations of ethical praise and blame, much less reproach under the rubric of shame and honour, with aesthetic and erotic dimensions of beauty which for Plato are wholly inseparable. A customary response, we saw, has been to distinguish the idea of acting for the sake of the *kalon* from considerations which seem to us germane to beauty and aesthetics. The question will only be pushed back, or glossed over, if we rest content with such labels for the *kalon* as the *fine* or *admirable* or even *noble* or *honourable*. A plausible temptation will then be to swing the pendulum in the other direction, to gesture to the idea that beauty has both aesthetic and ethical connotations. If the imperative to love beauty seems too alien to contemporary styles of thinking,

we will recall that the notion of beauty at issue in the *kalon* is closely related to the good. From there we might draw a straight explanatory line from a love of beauty, instilled early on in life, to the pursuit of what is truly good, virtue and happiness.

This sort of explanation is correct so far as it goes. Yet in its generality it may only go so far. The limitation is less that such an explanation requires filling in than that it does not solicit more detail in quite the right places. To operate with a rather thin notion of beauty, and to invest its interest largely in its relations to virtue and the good, is to occlude those distinctive features of the *kalon* which are most significant to aesthetic and ethical education for Plato, as well as most puzzling for us.¹ This is a cluster of features which fall under the head of the *social* dimension of the *kalon*, including admiration and emulation, shame and honour, and collective identities based upon the distribution of praise and blame in communal practices of esteem.

This chapter argues that the concept of the *kalon* organizes the cultural context in which one learns to recognize and aspire to virtue as *kalon*. It plays a regulative role in practices involving shame and honour which form, as it were, the background conditions for human character and conduct to show up *as kalon*, for one to become attracted and attuned to a standard of virtue within the fabric of a social world (§§2-3). Shame and honour are ethically necessary in this framework, ultimately, because virtue is a *public* affair whose pursuit involves aspiring to be

¹ My contrast of ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ evaluative concepts broadly follows the sense of Williams (1985): 128-41, 218 n7, in the spirit of Geertz (1973): 3-30. Thick evaluative concepts, such as *cowardice* or *chastity*, inseparably evaluate and describe a segment of reality from within an evaluative perspective, what Wittgenstein in later writings called a ‘form of life,’ of which those concepts are a part. Williams seems to assume that thin evaluative concepts, standardly *good* or *bad* and *right* or *wrong*, are only and generically evaluative, such that they are absolutely distinct from thick ones. I do not wish to presume this contrast, although I similarly wish to resist a certain impulse to reduce the ‘thicker’ to the ‘thinner.’ See Kirchin (2013) for further discussion of the thicket of meta-ethical issues.

and *appear kalon* before the eyes of others. Rather than suppress considerations of beauty in this context, as does the dominant approach, I show that Plato structures these motivations by a foundational sense of beauty acquired through acculturation. This sense must be shared because shame and honour include the desire to be worthy of admiration among a community. In this way, by resisting modern inclinations to distinguish sharply between aesthetic, ethical, and social dimensions of the *kalon*, we may better understand how the concept functions in aspiring to virtue and recover the relevance of beauty, for Plato, to its public aspect.

My argument revolves around but reinterprets a familiar claim that the principal target of musical-poetic and gymnastic education at *Republic* 2-3 – understood broadly as acculturation and character development – is what Plato terms spirit (*thumos*) or the spirited element of the soul (*to thumoeides*). As we shall see in §3, the purpose of so targeting spirit is to direct its non-rational motivations, organized around shame and honour, to aspire to be the kind of person one learns to admire as beautiful (*kalon*). Scholars continue to be divided, however, over whether the primary aim of spirited motivation is either to maintain self-esteem or to acquire the esteem of others. My account of the formal connection between spirited desire and the *kalon* intends to resolve this dispute by showing that it presumes a false dichotomy. Though both sides have textual merit, each mistakenly assumes that self- and other-directed motivations of spirit can and should be neatly distinguished. However, a key insight of Plato's use of the *kalon* to cultivate shame and honour, I propose, is that we ordinarily conceive of ourselves and of how we should live by affiliating with and distinguishing ourselves from others, in community and contest with them (§4).

It will be helpful to state why an analogy to beauty is deeply appropriate to the significance and implications of the *kalon* in connection to shame and honour. At the end of the Introduction, I suggested that this connection provides rich possibilities for thinking about beauty; however, it is not as though we do not already think about beauty along these lines, even if we tend not to think along these lines when we first confront the *kalon* or when we reference certain philosophical theories about beauty. In other words, if it is necessary to think about beauty more capaciously and about its relationship to the *kalon* more dialectically than does the dominant approach, it is not because there is a single, settled concept of beauty with which excellent scholars are unfamiliar, but because there is often a gap between what ‘we’ (in the west) think about beauty – how it figures in our experience – and what we *think* we think about beauty – how it figures or is disfigured in reflection, philosophical or otherwise.² The *kalon* in Plato can throw some helpful light on this gap, perhaps at its widest, on the roles of beauty in beautification, arts of making or enhancing beautiful appearance.

The point to stress, at once philosophical and philological, is that the concept of beauty has been and remains connected in important ways to shame, self-presentation, and self-conception much as the classical concept of the *kalon* had been. A corollary is that these social psychological connections, as we shall see, incite Plato to criticize what he believes to be dangerous cultural images of the *kalon* much as these connections incite many of us to criticize what we believe to be dangerous cultural images of beauty.³ This is a primary home for ‘our’

² This language of a gap owes to Williams (1993): 7, 91. This strategy is in keeping with the idea that ‘contested concepts,’ such as beauty, and the *kalon*, are characteristically used “aggressively and defensively,” as W.B. Gallie recognized when he coined the phrase ((1955-56): 172).

concept, which binds beauty first and foremost to how one appears or presents oneself before others, to sanctions of reproach when one violates or praise when one conforms to beauty norms, to feelings of pride, shame, disgust, desire, or envy which bear on how one comes to think and feel about oneself in relation to others. The internal connections among beauty, shame, and self-presentation are most salient in oppressive cases, as when sexist norms of feminine beauty in marketing, movies, or magazines with such apt titles as *Self* and *Essence* structure injurious senses of shame and self-worth. Precisely because we know the deep harms that seemingly superficial traffic of beauty can effect, we cannot reduce the complexity of beautification as ‘vain’ or ‘artifice’ and must rather take to heart how we all “look into the mirror not merely to see how we look, but how we expect others to see us, and... modulate our appearances in order that others shall see us as we hope to be seen” (Danto (2003): 69-70). We shall see Plato remarkably oriented from the fact that conceptions of beauty and ugliness are embodied in and acquired from the sort of concrete cultural sources to which Danto was referring, acutely aware that these sources inflect who we aspire to be in connection to how we desire to appear or not to appear before others. Crucial to these processes of socialization and identity formation is an ethically rich, though not unambiguous, notion of appearance which perhaps makes better sense of ourselves than we tend to allow.⁴ However that may be, the ambiguity must be borne in mind to make better sense of Plato. In the next two chapters, I will examine how Plato attempts to reconfigure two culturally

³ This is not to deny that there are deep differences, of course, in the content and structure of these attitudes between antiquity and modernity, yet the differences are not so vast as to cancel an attempt to locate instructive points of similarity.

⁴ Both the ambiguity and its tie to self-conception are suffused in the verb καλλωπίζω (LSJ *s.v.*), which tensely gathers meanings running the gamut from beautifying a face, deceiving, taking pride in oneself, boasting, and showing off.

prevalent but to his mind corrupt ways of seeming beautiful. In at least this respect, because it is constitutively a matter of appearance, the concept of the *kalon* names a problem for Plato, a source of anxiety much as beauty remains for us. By the end of this chapter, we will be in a position to see that his anxiety stems from how the social psychology of the *kalon* required to become virtuous threatens to reinforce attractive ways of living which seem but are not beautiful. But I must first make perspicuous what this psychology involves.

§2 *The Cultural Imagination*

The scheme of aesthetic and ethical education at *Rep.* 2-3 makes two assumptions. One is that the development of character proceeds by inculcating a sense of what seems beautiful and thus admirable in contrast to what seems ugly and thus shameful. The other is that human beings desire to be admired as beautiful and not to appear ugly and shameful on that basis. This section treats the first of these assumptions. It lays the groundwork for the second, which the following two sections analyze. My aim is ultimately to show the way in which a sense of beauty and a sense of shame and honour work together for Plato in one complex social psychological dynamic.

Republic 2-3 outlines processes of acculturation with a view to how and how not to inculcate certain habits of thought, emotion, perception, and action in children if they are to become virtuous. The program is best seen as an outline of childhood education as such with glimpses into how it has gone wrong and how it may go right. Plato has Socrates, Adeimantus, and Glaucon sketch the patterns of musical-poetic arts and gymnastic training that, like a mould

(τύπος⁵), give the foundational shape to young, malleable characters. The guiding assumption of the interlocutors is that the patterns to which children are exposed at an early age inculcate the basic imaginative and evaluative horizons which guide one through the world. Thus Socrates and company prescribe first the content and then the style of myths told to children; the use of musical rhythms, melodies, and instruments; and the pattern which all artisans indeed must embody in their works. Crucially, beauty is the end that regulates the entire process and its components.⁶ The discussion begins with the guideline that children must hear only stories that possess a beautiful pattern, from which Socrates infers that they truthfully portray the nature of gods and heroes and, by implication, how human beings should relate and behave (*Rep.* 377b-e). So must the rhythms, melodic tunings, and instruments used to accompany the myths betray and conform to the pattern of a beautiful character (400d). At the other end of the discussion, Socrates summarizes that the end of musical-poetic education is erotic desire towards the beautiful (τελευτᾶν τὰ μουσικὰ εἰς τὰ τοῦ καλοῦ ἐρωτικά, 403c). In line with elite Athenian ideology, which Plato is helping to construct, the paradigm is a certain restrained erotic desire for a beautiful boy (403d-404b).⁷ But the preceding discussion makes clear that he means *all* instances

⁵ τύπος refers in *Rep.* 2-3 most frequently to a mould that makes an impression (377c8; 379a2, a5; 380c7; 383a2, c6; 402d3; 403e1; 412b2; 414a6; back-reference at 443c1; *Cf. Leg.* 718c5, 778c2, 801c6, 803e5, 809b5, 876e1), but also to the impression itself (377b2) and the pattern of myths (387c1, c9; 396e1, e9).

⁶ This point does not always receive its due emphasis. Richardson Lear (2006a) is for the most part a notable exception, yet seems to me to over-emphasize its relation to the good, particularly via the notion of perfection (107-109, 117-18). I am, however, largely sympathetic to her account, and although mine differs in approach, emphasis, and some important details noted below, I believe mine is complementary to hers.

⁷ For pederasty as an elite construction and ideology, see Hubbard (1998).

of sensible beauty, found in painting, rhythmic metre, and embroidery as much as in bodies, actions, pursuits, and characters.

Why the privileged place for beauty? Part of the explanation lies in the fact that musical-poetic education cultivates the ground from which the right sorts of beliefs, desires, and habits of *pre-rational* children may grow. Absent developed rational capacities, perceptual and emotional capacities must lead the way. Two core components of the *kalon* (essential also to *beauty*) especially suit it for this task. First and foremost, the *kalon* is constitutively a matter of *appearance*. Throughout and before Plato, we find the *kalon* tied mostly to visual, then auditory, appearance. The sight of a face with the bloom of youth is *kalon* (*Rep.* 601b), as is a showered and snazzy Socrates (*Symp.* 174a) or a courageous action (*Lach.* 192c), though so too are the sounds of a well-composed Gorgianic speech (*Symp.* 198b-199a). But the *kalon* makes its appearance to the other senses and notably also in non-sensory ways to the intellect, for example when wisdom or truth is experienced in mathematical, dialectical or some quasi-mystical form of philosophical cognition (*Rep.* 509a; *Symp.* 209a, 210de).⁸ This last point registers not so much that the relevant notion of appearance extends beyond sensory modalities, but that it is a *phenomenological* notion in the following sense: to say that the *kalon* appears is to say that it shows itself to the awareness of someone. The relevant notion of appearance does permit a distinction between appearance and being, such that one can ask whether how something appears really is as it appears to be, but it does not presuppose a dichotomy between appearance and being. Being must make its

⁸ For the *kalon* as visual, see first and foremost *Phdr.* 250de. In Homer, the *kalon* is also primarily visual, sometimes auditory, but never applied to other senses. For this pattern in Plato, cf. *Hip. Mai.* 289e-299a but see 290d for mention of a *kalos etnos*, a bean soup. Perhaps in this connection, an old joke, preserved I believe in a scholium to Eupolis (which I unfortunately can no longer track down), attested to the primarily visual application of *kalon*: when told that a soup is *kalon*, a man replies, “You can see the taste?”

appearance, after all. Indeed, the *kalon* plays a central role in Platonic metaphysics, most evidently at *Phaedrus* 250de, precisely because it constitutes some fundamental sphere of being becoming manifest to human awareness. So although, as the following two chapters will demonstrate, the primacy of appearance requires Plato to contest prominent but in his view spurious ways of seeming beautiful, the nature of the *kalon qua* appearance is not necessarily and only derivatively *mere* appearance.⁹ Otherwise Plato would not rely on this quality of appearance, rooted first and foremost in sensation, to enable non-rational children to lay hold of what is *kalon*.

The second component of the *kalon* on which Plato depends is pleasure.¹⁰ So connected is the *kalon* to pleasure that Socrates turns immediately from recommending the erotic desire that the *kalon* inspires to warning against unrestrained sexual conduct (*Rep.* 403d-404a; cf. *Charm.* 155c). This gives some clue as to the notion of pleasure at issue, as well as why the term ‘pleasure’ can perhaps mislead. For what the *kalon* is thought to elicit is not simply a subjective enjoyable feeling, but a sensation that inherently motivates, often in complex ways. If we say therefore that the *kalon* is – but is not only – a matter of *attractive* appearance, we should understand this to

⁹ The need for rehabilitation of the concept of appearance is a chief insight of Kosman (2010): esp. 353–54. His own echo of Heidegger, *Being and Time* (1962 / 1927), §7 – *phainomenon* is ontologically prior to semblance, itself echoing, despite terminological differences, Hegel (2004 / 1835): §14 on the concept of appearance (*Schein*) – should not be missed. One value of employing a phenomenological approach to the concept of the *kalon* is to overcome a psychological dualism of subject and object inherited from early modern epistemology. To ask whether the *kalon* (or beauty) is ‘subjective’ or ‘objective’ is to muddle the issue and, more worrisomely, apply an inapplicable distinction to classical antiquity. This question is notably not equivalent to the (perhaps confused) question at *Hip. Mai.* 294de whether the *kalon (qua* what is fitting) makes something *kalon* or *be seen to be kalon*. This, in addition to correcting a prevalent reduction of ‘appearance’ in Plato to *mere* appearance, a thoroughly distortive version of which may be seen in the remark that “phenomena in their sensuous appearance are simply uninteresting to Plato” (Porter (2010): 91).

¹⁰ For pleasure and the *kalon*, see also e.g., *Leg.* 654cd, 667de, *Prot.* 358b; *Ti.* 80b. Woerther (2008): 95-7 oddly denies that pleasure, involved in beauty, is employed in musical education in the *Republic*.

mean that what appears *kalon* attracts one towards it. It exerts a ‘magnetic’ force that absorbs and captivates one in erotic pursuit. Although pleasure presents an agent’s situation as good in sophisticated ways (*Rep.* 581c, *Phil.* 36c-40d, *Leg.* 567c), it is crucial to childhood education, though clearly not unproblematic, in the first instance because pleasure is the strongest or the sole motivation on which education can draw at this early stage.¹¹ Put differently, Plato seems to assume that children are naturally attracted to and pleased by beauty.¹² The twin components of appearance and attraction make beauty a perfect vehicle by which to appeal to, direct, and give content to the most elemental attractions and repulsions of non-rational souls.

This is not to suggest that Plato accords beauty a privileged place in education because it is the best resource one can apply to cognitively poor children. Were that so, we would be at a loss to explain why he has Socrates emphasize beauty so greatly or why there should be any real problem if children do not love beauty. His interest in beauty is more interesting and specific, and ultimately based on more complicated affective and social factors inapplicable to very young children. These later and more complex factors are permutations of a foundational sense of beauty and ugliness provided by musical-poetic education. Socrates takes it that primary education configures the basic horizon in terms of which one first makes sense of the world and imagines

¹¹ This is not to imply, however, that a proper response to the *kalon* in this context is, as Peponi (2012) variously claims in her otherwise excellent study, “dispassionate” (147) or “detached” (148) so that the sense experience may be “transcended” (153).

¹² The argument of Richardson Lear (2006a): 115-16 for this point has a precedent in Francis Hutcheson: “Had we no *natural Sense of Beauty and Harmony*, we could never be prejudic’d in favour of Objects or Sounds as *Beautiful* or *Harmonious*. Education may make an unattentive GOTH imagine that his *Countrymen* have attain’d the Perfection of *Architecture*, and an Aversion to their Enemys the ROMANS, may have join’d some disagreeable Ideas to their very Buildings, and excited them to their Demolition; but he had never form’d these Prejudices, had he been void of a *Sense of Beauty*.” (1738): VII.3)

who one should be and how one should live. The guideline that the content of myths conform to a beautiful pattern is the logical beginning of the educational scheme because the basic outlook and imaginative horizon these myths fashion will orient and guide one throughout life (378d, 430a-b).¹³ Witness Cephalus in Book 1. In his old age, he still rushes off to sacrifice in fear of afterlife punishments about which he was told as a child (330d-331d).

It is correct to say that the framework formed by musical-poetic education provides and structures one's fundamental beliefs, desires, habits, and emotions. Yet truer still to emphasize that this framework configures perception, reaching down to the most basic elements of how one experiences the world and is affected by it. Although this emphasis seldom receives its due, perception is the primary concern at this point because Socrates assumes, more specifically, that musical-poetic education fashions a total *sensibility* whose leading categories are the beautiful and the ugly. A young person must be exposed only to what genuinely is beautiful, we are told, to learn how to discern sharply (ὁξύτατ' ἂν αἰσθάνοιτο) when anything is made beautiful or ugly by craft or nature, praise and take pleasure in what is actually beautiful (τὰ μὲν καλὰ) and, through recognizing and being attracted to beauty in others, become himself a 'beautiful-and-good' person, a *kalos kagathos*. These habits of perception, evaluation, and emotion are accompanied by disgust at what is ugly (τὰ δ' αἰσχροτά). The child would rebuke these things even before she can grasp why she should, just as she delights in, praises, and desires what is beautiful (*Rep.* 401e).

¹³ See for considerable attention on this score, Ferrari (1989) and Lear (1992) and, for its wider importance to imagining the shape of a good life, MacIntyre (1984): 204-25.

An essential feature of this picture is that Socrates assumes that children learn to discriminate what seems beautiful from what seems ugly in terms of what they have been exposed to. They admire as beautiful what they have been acculturated into and reject what they have not as ugly and shameful.¹⁴ This assumption is not made explicit. Yet it explains the need to ensure that children are exposed only to *genuine* beauty so that whatever innate attraction one may have to it, if any, would not become covered over or weakened by bad upbringing. In other words, against the assumption that children are naturally constituted to love beauty pulls a less sanguine assumption that children will love and find beautiful the patterns that they are brought up with, which become authoritative for them. The task of musical-poetic education for Socrates is to align these two dispositions. The cost of not doing so is dire.

For the basic sensibility fashioned by musical-poetic education does not simply precede the acquisition and development of rational capacities, as *Rep* 401e makes plain. A love of genuine beauty is also necessary for *promoting* rational capacities. If and only if well-educated, Socrates maintains, one “would embrace reason when it came and recognize it easily through its being so greatly akin” (ἐλθόντος δὲ τοῦ λόγου ἀσπάζοιτ’ ἂν αὐτὸν γνωρίζων δι’ οἰκειότητα μάλιστα, *Rep.* 402a).¹⁵ If and only if someone is reared to love genuine beauty will she perceive and desire

¹⁴ I defend this reading further below. Richardson Lear (2006a): 111 is exemplary for observing this ambivalence of beautiful appearance. Yet her account explains the ambivalence primarily in terms of the internal coherence of myths “beautifully made” (111). Emphasis rather belongs on the way in which myths construct and cohere with a set of cultural values taken to be beautiful, as Richardson Lear suggests more tentatively (“perhaps”).

¹⁵ Several translations of and commentaries on this passage understand τοῦ λόγου as ‘the reason’ or ‘the account’ to suggest an explanation why some item is ugly (or beautiful). It beggars understanding, however, how a well-reared young *person* is to be most akin to ‘a reason’ in this narrower sense; Jenkins (2015): 859-60, recognizing the difficulty, offers a tentative suggestion. In any event, we should hear resonances of proportion or order in *logos* as such (cf. ὁμοιότητά... τῷ καλῷ λόγῳ at *Rep.* 401d, with n18

characteristics of reason (*logos*), such as harmony, order, and proportion precisely because she will have begun to cultivate such attributes in herself. In this way, this first stage of education prepares future guardians to be receptive to and motivated by aesthetic-cum-ethical values such as unity and order central to their later mathematical and dialectical studies. The preparation proceeds on the assumption that the harmony and musicality of their souls will sufficiently embody and make them attracted to the rational order of the cosmos.¹⁶ This is to say that exposure to genuine beauty instils in embryo, as it were, the kind of erotic desire that constitutes philosophical activity. Plato explores the metaphysical reaches of this idea most emphatically in his discussions of the Beautiful itself in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, but these reaches are nonetheless also foundational to the characterization of ‘philosophy’, its proper desires, pleasures, and objects throughout the latter half of the *Republic*, beginning memorably, and importantly, with the notion that the *philosophos* alone loves and seeks to embrace the non-sensible nature of beauty (476bc). But to turn here is to get ahead of ourselves. More immediately, exposure to genuine beauty makes virtue a possible target. This target resides first and foremost in a social world, and it is on this world that I should like to set our focus.

The principle of aesthetic and ethical education, later made explicit (*Rep.* 425c), is the Homeric principle that like always encourages like. It leads Plato to worry that unless one is first exposed only to what seems and *is in fact* beautiful – not what seems *but is not* beautiful – one becomes unlike a virtuous person. Then one cannot recognize the beauty of a virtuous person

below), to convey properly that Plato is discussing a substantive conception of reason, on which one acquires rational capacities *tout court*, as at *Leg.* 653a-654d. See Gill (1996): 271.

¹⁶ Burnyeat (2000): 42-55 and 74-81 suggests that in the *Republic* mathematical and meta-mathematical values such as unity and simplicity just are ethical and aesthetic values.

and her deeds, reject them as ugly, and never cultivate a virtuous character in oneself.¹⁷ Rot will have set in where it can be least afforded, in a foundational sense of what is beautiful and ugly. His response to this worry voices a conviction at the heart of the social and political project of the *Republic*:

So is it only poets whom we must supervise and compel to embody an image of the good character in their poems or else not compose poetry among us? Or must we supervise other craftsmen, too, and prevent them from this bad character – licentious, illiberal, and graceless – whether in images of living beings, buildings, or any other product of their craft... lest our guardians be brought up on images of vice, as if in a poisonous meadow, cropping and grazing from many places each day until, little by little and unawares, they accumulate some large mass of vice in their souls? Rather, we must seek out craftsmen who have a natural talent for capturing what is truly beautiful and graceful, so that our young, dwelling as it were in a healthy place, may be benefited from all over. Something of those beautiful works will strike their eyes and ears, and like a breeze bringing health from good places, will bring them imperceptibly right from childhood on to likeness, friendship, and concord with beautiful reason.¹⁸

(*Rep.* 401b-d)

ἄρ' οὖν τοῖς ποιηταῖς ἡμῖν μόνον ἐπιστατητέον καὶ προσαναγκαστέον τὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ εἰκόνα ἢ θοὺς ἐμποιεῖν τοῖς ποιήμασιν ἢ μὴ παρ' ἡμῖν ποιεῖν, ἢ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις δημιουργοῖς ἐπιστατητέον καὶ διακωλυτέον τὸ κακὸς τοῦτο καὶ ἀκόλαστον καὶ ἀνελεύθερον καὶ ἄσχημον μήτε ἐν εἰκόσι ζώων μήτε ἐν οἰκοδομήμασι μήτε ἐν ἄλλῳ μηδενὶ δημιουργουμένῳ ἐμποιεῖν... ἵνα μὴ ἐν κακίας εἰκόσι τρεφόμενοι ἡμῖν οἱ φύλακες ὥσπερ ἐν κακῇ βοτάνῃ, πολλὰ ἐκάστης ἡμέρας κατὰ σμικρὸν ἀπὸ πολλῶν δρεπόμενοι τε καὶ νεμόμενοι, ἔν τι συνιστάντες λανθάνωσιν κακὸν μέγα ἐν τῇ αὐτῶν ψυχῇ, ἀλλ' ἐκείνους ζητητέον τοὺς δημιουργοὺς τοὺς εὐφυῶς δυναμένους ἰχνεύειν τὴν τοῦ καλοῦ τε καὶ εὐσχήμονος φύσιν, ἵνα ὥσπερ ἐν ὑγιεινῷ τόπῳ οἰκοῦντες οἱ νέοι

¹⁷ Hence why exposure to genuine beauty is not merely sufficient for welcoming reason, as the optatives at *Rep.* 401e might lead us to suspect. Note the continuity, but also the transformation of this train of thought, in Shaftesbury, for example, for whom beautiful comportment manifests rational activity, proportion, and harmony, and leads one to cultivate 'inner' harmony in oneself ((1999 / 1711): esp. 2:403-8 and 3:179). Herder, too, exhorts one to let architectural beauty "impress itself on you so that it arranges *your very soul*... as if it were a beautiful building" in a stunning passage modelled after *Symp.* 210a-e ((2006 / 1769): 280).

¹⁸ Note two points of translation: (1) Shorey correctly renders ἐμποιεῖν by 'to embody', rather than 'to represent'. The latter misrepresents the concept of *mimēsis* in surrounding passages, which includes expression, on which see Halliwell (2002): esp. 62, 131-32 on this passage. (2) τῷ καλῷ λόγῳ at 401d2 presents puzzles. Many translators translate 'with the beauty of reason'. 'Reason' for τῷ λόγῳ nicely picks up on two uses of λόγος at 402a2 (λόγον and τοῦ λόγου), but the sense of either is far from obvious. λόγον may refer to an explanation or reason why something is the case, but more plausibly refers to rational capacities tout court; τοῦ λόγου seems to refer to the latter; see n 15 above. Cf. also Gill (1996): 271.

ἀπὸ παντὸς ὠφελῶνται, ὁπόθεν ἂν αὐτοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων ἢ πρὸς ὄψιν ἢ πρὸς ἀκοήν τις¹⁹ προσβάλῃ, ὥσπερ αὔρα φέρουσα ἀπὸ χρηστῶν τόπων ὑγίειαν, καὶ εὐθὺς ἐκ παίδων λανθάνῃ εἰς ὁμοιότητά τε καὶ φιλίαν καὶ συμφωνίαν τῷ καλῷ λόγῳ ἄγουσα;

The conviction is that the total environment in which one lives has a decisive impact on one's psychological constitution, especially but not only when one is young. Socrates tells us here how this happens. Little by little, we unconsciously take in images from all corners of a culture.²⁰ A culture includes social, legal, economic and political institutions and practices – and the values, emotions and beliefs they promote – that define how members of a group live and conceive of themselves. A culture also includes, as parts of those institutions and practices, material crafts which populate domestic and public spaces; Socrates mentions painting, weaving, embroidery, architecture, and carpentry along with musical and poetic performance (401a). The point above is that the entire material culture in which one is immersed – buildings passed, clothes worn, prayers sung, music heard – imperceptibly and gradually mould character. Of course, as the principle that like encourages like logically requires, the process is one of mutual interaction. A culture shapes the characters of its individual participants, but so too is it constituted, shaped, and sustained by them; or as Plato says of a *polis*, it is born not of rock but of the characters of those who live in it (544d).²¹ Still, the starting point and focus for Plato are non-rational and largely

¹⁹ Reading the emendation of Adam (1902).

²⁰ This is the place to record my debt to Burnyeat (1999). While Burnyeat pays little attention to the *kalon* or to *thumos*, I hope to reveal how fundamental these concepts and their relation are to the cultural concerns which his Tanner Lectures sensitively pursue.

²¹ On the importance of agency to a proper understanding of culture, see Moody-Adams (1994). See also *Rep.* 435e: Egyptian, Thracian, and Athenian communities derive their characteristics from their members. Lear (1992) persuasively shows that this mutual interaction is an important facet of the city-soul analogy, though as Ferrari (2003): 43-52 argues, it cannot be its basis or central point.

passive processes of acculturation by which children acquire an image of human excellence.²² These processes have this impact because all cultural products *embody images* (εἰκόνα... ἐμποιεῖν). The images that concern Plato are images of good or bad character. These sorts of character are manifest in an item seeming beautiful or ugly.

Some cultural products embody images of good and bad character straightforwardly. These are first and foremost myths of gods and heroes meant to instruct the young. Myths present certain characters as exemplars to emulate and children will invariably come to adopt them as such. Invariably, because these heroes and gods inspire admiration and emulation since by hypothesis they are paragons of virtue (ἀρετή), most beautiful and best (κάλλιστος καὶ ἄριστος, 381c; cf. 390e-391e).²³ Although it is somewhat unclear in precisely what sense they are ‘best’ (ἄριστος) and ‘most beautiful’ (κάλλιστος) – these honourific terms need not be moralizing – it is clear that their force confers the highest of praise onto heroes and gods so that children will admire them and, by virtue of what are later called spirited desires, will strive to emulate them and their behaviour and feel shame (αἰσχυνόμενος, 388d) if they do not live up to this standard. More powerful than the fact that these myths are told by caretakers or endorsed by the wider culture, then, is their psychological impression of *who* one aspires to be and of which ways of living are good or even possible. Unsurprisingly, Socrates begins his reform of Athenian musical-

²² At the dawn of television, Warry (1962): 67 acutely connected Plato’s anxiety over passive reception of poetry to contemporary worries about mass media. See also Nehamas (1999): 279-99.

²³ The concept of imaginative identification in Jauss (1974): 303-7 is apposite. Cf. also *Prot.* 326a: a child should learn compositions that contain “descriptions and praises and encomia to good men of old so that the boy, vying with them, may imitate these men and long to become such as they [ζηλῶν μιμῆται καὶ ὁρέγεται τοιοῦτος γενέσθαι].” The point applies to adults at *Rep.* 607a and *Menex.* 246d. *Rep.* 500cd provides good evidence of the *erotic* basis of this psychology.

poetic education by censoring parts of many traditional myths that glorify certain figures and ways of living that he wants Glaucon and Adeimantus to find ugly and shameful, not beautiful and admirable. Which ones and why will concern us later. The full scope and significance of the poetic reforms emerges only if we pause on the wider, and odder, idea to which poetry is the main contributor: that *all* artistic products, including buildings and embroidery, embody images of good or bad character.

In what sense do buildings, paintings, or tables embody images of good or bad character? Plato does not presume that all artifacts represent a good or bad character explicitly, for example by portraying the triumphant tyrant-slayers Harmodius and Aristogeiton. His idea is rather that artistic products express good or bad character insofar as they manifest or fail to manifest gracefulness (or shapeliness, elegance: εὐσχημοσύνη).²⁴ Gracefulness and lack of gracefulness (ἄσχημοσύνη) are species of beauty and ugliness. The terms apply to natural phenomena and inanimate artifacts alike. But as the notion of an image of *character* suggests, the focus is on a graceful person; graceful crafts are subordinate and relate focally to that end. A person can manifest graceful or graceless character in his or her stance, gait, gestures, rhythms and tones of

²⁴ The explanation of Richardson Lear (2006a): 114-15, though similar, omits the key term of gracefulness and takes a needlessly cumbersome route. It relies on *Rep.* 601d: the beauty (*kallos*), correctness, and virtue of an item depend on its use. Her explanation is that because (a) the virtuous person is the ideal user of artifacts (in virtue of her knowledge), then (b) beautiful artifacts are useful to virtuous people, and thus (c) an experience of the beauty of functional items requires at some level imagining and approving of its ideal user. But we should perhaps not rely heavily on *Rep.* 601d, which in context may just be a subtle way to undermine the authority of poets as makers by conferring it onto users. (Usha Nathan helpfully reminded me of this possibility.) Further, (a) seems unmotivated and the inferences to (b) and (c) insecure. Why, to use Richardson Lear's example, must the *experience* of beautiful cookware *always* involve imagination of a home cook one admires, and why must an *ideal* user so figure? One can see a beloved's lyre and think of the beloved, not an expert lyrist (*cf. Phd.* 73d). More apt are the social significations of beautiful artifacts, which Richardson Lear seems to espy and which I discuss below; see also the deeply Platonic terms of Bourdieu (1984): 77.

speech, and patterns of choice and thought. Graceful habits, Socrates and Glaucon agree, manifest the intelligence, skillful exercise, and order of a virtuous person, just as a graceful vase may manifest a potter's intelligence and skillful expertise. On analogy with the art of pottery, we should say that a graceful character displays skill in the art of living. It signifies more specifically that one has fashioned the *style* (λέξις) *of living* of a virtuous person, of a *kalos kagathos*, not unlike the cultivated style of an expert potter manifest in her work (*Rep.* 400d-401a). Artistic products embody images of good or bad character, then, primarily because they embody graceful or graceless rhythms, arrangements, or patterns characteristic of graceful and virtuous people. The beauty radiating from the former is supposed to predispose the young to be struck by the beauty radiating from the latter. Again, the explanation follows the principle is that like encourages like. Graceful items, particularly rhythm and harmony (401de), bring gracefulness to the soul; in turn one may discern and be attracted to the beauty of a virtuous person and her graceful style of living. Indeed this beautiful character, especially with a beautiful body to match, Socrates exclaims, is "the most beautiful sight for anyone who is able to see" (κάλλιστον θέαμα τῷ δυναμένῳ θεᾶσθαι, 402d). If only one had the eyes to see, if only this seeing were so simple.

One complication to register, apart from the need for good upbringing and, to anticipate my argument later, social institutions, stems from the fact that the concept of εὐσχημοσύνη implies a beautiful *appearance*; hence my talk of expression and manifestation. Gracefulness applies above all to how things look, be it the look of certain physical features, character traits, status symbols or, plausibly, an inseparable combination of all three.²⁵ Such looks can, of course,

²⁵ These categories are not really separable, as is often assumed (by *e.g.*, Dover (1974): 70-71; see rather Nehamas (2007b): 102-3). Both body and character are implicated in displays of status, for example in the drape of clothing or speed of gait. Hence *Rep.* 401b collocates ἄσχημον with being licentious (ἀκόλαστον)

be faked. Indeed, the entire project of *Rep.* 2-10 to defend the life of justice is instigated by and must wrestle with the attractions of living a thoroughly unjust life while projecting a just façade through a certain gracefulness (εὐσχημοσύνης κιβδήλου, 366b), or like the deviant tyrant in Book 9, a certain outward dignity (προστάσεως... σχηματίζονται, 577a). Socrates is thus well aware that the value of gracefulness on which he relies carries the risk of deception. And it is worth emphasizing that neither he nor we can mitigate this risk by simply distinguishing some inner from some outer sphere of beauty. The outward vector of beauty as *appearance* does not allow such an easy distinction. Nonetheless, Socrates proceeds on the conviction that graceful habits do manifest virtue and this shows that he is not particularly bothered at this stage by sceptical epistemological worries concerning the possibility of deception – this, despite his deep concern to distinguish what is genuinely beautiful from what might seem but not be beautiful. I think there is a good reason why not, but it requires a brief excursus.

The reason is not, as we might have expected, the substantive and I think correct assumption of Socrates that bodily appearance betrays character, whether in the turn of a wrist or blush of a cheek.²⁶ It is a brave assumption at that: his own famously ugly features may not reflect the condition of his soul, yet Socrates is disinclined to distinguish simply or firmly between bodily appearance and character, certainly not in respect to the beauty of either. He and Glaucon resort to the concept of gracefulness with confidence, or without consternation, rather because its cultural resonances convey in broad outline the shape of a life that each already accepts as worth

and slavish (ἀνελεύθερον). For ethical and status connotations of ἡ εὐσχημοσύνη, see LSJ *s.v.*, citing notably *Symp.* 196ab and *De decenti habitu* (*On the Decency of Dress*), 1.

²⁶ The reverse is the case at *Rep.* 403e: a beautiful and good body comes from a good soul.

pursuing. These resonances come from the fact that gracefulness and the ideal of being a *kalos kagathos* contain more than a hint of aristocratic rhetoric. This is worth stressing. It helpfully reminds us that the adjective *kalos* and its cognates carry tremendous sociopolitical baggage as part of a nexus of concepts used to commend, define, and contest excellence in archaic and classical Athens. From its central uses to its more penumbral associations, the concept is saturated with political, class, and gendered connotations.²⁷ This is why, for example, we almost never find it applied to women in tragedy; why it is frequently opposed to *ponēria*, signifying low class, labour and rusticity; and plausibly why the painter Euphronius can depict an aristocratic lad training at the gymnasium with the common inscription *ho pais kalos*, ‘the boy is beautiful,’ but chooses to identify his slave-boy simply as *ho pais*, ‘the boy.’²⁸ Just how thick this concept is comes into full view when we remember that *kalos kagathos* was a class epithet, fraught with agonistic and shifting claims to high status. The single compound term seems to have been invented by the nobility in the 5th-century BCE in order to secure their status after it became possible for members

²⁷ Witness Hippias’ outrage at the mere mention of boorish fig-wood soup spoons in connection with the *kalon* at *Hip. Mai.* 290d-291a; for the class context of the dialogue, see Kurke (2010): 345-58. On class and gender, see also Konstan (2014): 85-95 (though focused on the much-later *Daphnis and Chloe* by Longus), though I remain unconvinced that beauty is the province of courtesans (*heterai*), not of upper-class women. On the one hand, Konstan concedes (89) that common descriptions of “looks that bespeak a decent upbringing” may refer to beauty, a concession which might give pause to his narrower construal of beauty in treating the adjective *kalos*. On the other hand, it may not be beauty at in descriptions, for example, of a *hetera* who “knows more tricks, has more experience... stoops to sordid things” (*Men. Epi.* 794-96), as Konstan oddly implies: “such glamour” (!). More congenial to his case would be *Dem.* 48.55: “beautiful cloaks” (ἱμάτια καλά) are evidence of a *hetera*’s ostentation and failure to act decorously (καλῶς).

²⁸ Cf. the calyx-krater by Euphronios, Berlin F 2180 (*Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin*). Further, *kalos* on *kalos*-inscriptions may function in opposition to *katapygon*, which probably first referred to an anally penetrated male but became a wider negative epithet. A *kalos* boy had to be careful to behave modestly in public with his lover for fear of being called a *katapygon* (Lear and Cantarella (2008): 170). On *kalos*-inscriptions, see the work of François Lissarague; his (1999) is germane to the social aspects emphasized here.

of other socioeconomic classes to claim that they were among the best, the *agathoi*. Arguably first recorded in Herodotus (1.30.4), the epithet was a self-conscious attempt by those of good birth, breeding and wealth to mark themselves out as true superiors after their traditional social title of being an *agathos* fell into dispute. Whereas in archaic and early classical use, the term *agathos* primarily denoted the most highly regarded and useful man in a community, a warrior chieftain or later a noble statesman, new political, military, and social configurations made it debatable which characteristics count as most useful and who should be most highly regarded.²⁹ The defensive strategy of the members of the aristocracy was to yoke the title of *agathos* to aristocratic connotations of the term *kalos*, connected as it was to displays of wealth and leisure – long hair, oiled limbs, toned physique, elegant dress – that distinguished the upper class. These connotations work to explain how Socrates can place the ideal of the *kalos kagathos* hand in conceptual hand with the ease and gracefulness emblematic of an entire way of living. The linguistic and conceptual maneuver of the aristocrats did not secure the victory for which they had hoped, however. What began as a contest continued as such. Athenian anti-aristocrats appropriated the title of *kalos kagathos* and applied it regardless of class to ‘good’ citizens in an effort to challenge the rule of the nobility and to promote, or at least capitalize on, burgeoning democratic ideals.³⁰

²⁹ Presciently analyzed by Nietzsche in *On the Genealogy of Morality* I.5 (Nietzsche (1994)). On the shifting sense of *agathos*, cf. Alc. 53-60 and Eur. *Ele.* 367-90: Orestes grants that the Farmer is *aristos* because he is chaste in marital relations. Jaeger (1945) and Adkins (1960): esp. 32-6 remain valuable, though each assumes that antiquity *develops* into a more sophisticated modernity; for Adkins, develops *moral* notions only after c. 450 BCE with the rise of cooperative as opposed to competitive virtues.

³⁰ This genealogy is well told by Donlan (1973): 369-74 and Ober (1989): 252-60, among others. Aristocratic use: e.g., Xen. *Mem.* 4.4.22-3, Isoc. 3.45-7, Dem. 18.93, 278; 21.218; 54.14; and esp. 25.24: ἡ καλοκαγαθία in contrast to ἡ πονηρία, also at Lys. 12.86 and Isoc. 15.100, 316. Anti-aristocratic or democratic use: e.g., Lys.

This last remark, and the contested nature of the concept of the *kalos kagathos* more generally, suggest that there is no reason to infer from Socrates' appeal to this ideal alone that he (or Plato) defines beautiful character in terms of social status or that he lauds a traditional aristocratic conception of human excellence. Indeed, his frequent criticisms of sympotic practices, aristocratic funerary and pederastic practices, and sophistic education – not to mention the implication that Athenian elites do not know what or who really is *kalos kagathos* (*Ap.* 21d) and are no better than (what *they* consider) the vulgar crowd (*Prot.* 347c-e) – provide plenty of reason to think that he is rather playing on and along with aristocratic pretensions to subvert them.

So “why”, as Herder once asked rhetorically of *kalos kagathos*, “so much fuss about a word?” (*Wozu aber so viel über ein wort?*).³¹ Firstly, the sociopolitical baggage of the phrase *kalos kagathos* and more generally of the concept of the *kalon* encapsulates and prepares us to recognize the way in which the *kalon* traffics in social space to mobilize and contest shared communal values and sentiments. Such traffic stakes a claim as to who or what merits admiration and, implicitly, elevates them above other or opposed ways of living deemed *aischron*. As a variant of this,

30.14, *Dem.* 22.47 (sarcastically), *Aristoph.* *Clouds* 102, *Wasps* 1256, and esp. *Knights* 185-87 where the Sausage-seller claims bad parentage (‘κ πονηρῶν) rather than be thought a *kalos kagathos* (ἐκ καλῶν εἰ καγαθῶν), using the term in ‘scare quotes’ to repudiate aristocratic use; Dover (1974): 43-5 fails to appreciate the class connotations or the humor. We might usefully compare *kalos kagathos* to the account in Knox (1970) of British uses of ‘good man’ and ‘*pukka sahib*’ in colonial India. Her account shows well the limits of R.M. Hare’s neat distinction between descriptive and evaluative meaning. This distinction, however, inclines Donlan to claim that archaic uses of *kalos* only describe physical beauty without evaluation (366-68).

³¹ Herder (2002 / 1767): 47 (p. 295 in the original). “About a word,” he continued, “which was ever the expression of their [*i.e.*, the classical Greeks] character and the summit of their praises one can never say too much. The explanation of such words unlocks for us a manner of thought and police, *character* and ethics, in short, the secret of a nation – without which we always make distorted judgments of a people, learn distortedly from it, and imitate it intolerably.” Herder emphasized that *kalos kagathos* was a thick and a contested concept requiring historical study, correcting on attempts to approximate the phrase to contemporary ideals by Lessing, Wieland, and Shaftesbury.

secondly, the thickness of these concepts entails that Socrates' choice to exploit rhetoric which retained, or never fully shed, aristocratic associations nonetheless appeals to whatever expectations of propriety Glaucon and Adeimantus, two well-born lads, import into their visions of human flourishing. This entails that what they can consider graceful, let alone acceptable, depends on how they have learned to demarcate high-born from boor, us from them, cultured from simpleton, and – as with the young guardians – 'beautiful' from 'ugly'. The point is instructive for methodological reasons, whose fuller significance will emerge in the following two chapters. It has become more commonly appreciated that the argument of the *Republic* aims to convince these young potential statesmen, not to show the so-called amoralist Thrasymachus, that a just life is superior to an unjust one; and that, to do this, Socrates must appeal to their current convictions, presuppositions, and individual character dispositions.³² If so, then the account of education examined so far requires us as interpreters to pay especial attention to background cultural conceptions of beauty (*to kalon*) which Socrates appropriates or seeks to displace, as well as to the psychological means by which he can use this concept for rhetorical and philosophical persuasion. This I shall try to do in the following two chapters.

To return to our main line of inquiry: I asked in what sense cultural products embody images of good or bad character. The notion of gracefulness provided an explanation. Apprised of the sociopolitical background that gives this idea its substance and force, we may now notice

³² Both of Glaucon's stretches from *Rep.* 372c-376b and 398c-417b showcase his spirited nature and attachment to *kala*, for which his brother teases him at 548d. In the first, he indignantly wants to *preserve* proper, civilized aristocratic activities; self-assertion and preserving custom are hallmarks of spirit. The second addresses his interest in warrior training and beautiful boys, recalled at 474d-475a. Ferrari (2003): 15-31, Gallagher (2004), and Rosen (2005): 60-78 are quite sensitive to the general methodological point, though reaching different conclusions. See, with reservations, Fine (2011) for attention to Socrates' use of irony in his attempt to moderate and educate Glaucon.

an important feature of this explanation. The passage we have been discussing shows Socrates acutely aware that the decoration of our world issues decorum by which we are to live in it. This is to say slightly more than the truism that artifacts reflect values of their makers and their intended users. This truism does not yet capture how ethical directives are bound up in the social significations and value of artifacts. Consider, for example, how reclining couches (*klinai*) in classical Athens testify to a package of choices that define the élite aristocratic culture of the symposium. These choices imply which sorts of activities are valuable, who should and should not perform them, and how. So do the musical instruments, wine coolers, drinking songs and games, or other parts of the network of artifacts that comprise this corner of the culture. Artistic products embody images of good or bad character, then, also because they implicitly present a set of activities as eminently worthwhile and convey an image of the sort of *person* who engages in those activities. This is at any rate the aim of surrounding the young in a graceful environment, as Gabriel Richardson Lear has noted. I agree with Richardson Lear that Socrates wants to ensure that all elements of the total culture contribute to a sense of what a virtuous person is like and, specifically, which sort of activities and items this paragon of beauty would deem appropriate.³³ Although her explanation of how this sense is inculcated does not invoke the key concept of gracefulness, this concept is particularly useful to that end. In connection with *kalokagathia*, gracefulness implicates a nexus of artifacts and the activities, occasions, and social relations implied by their use – excluding others, such as pipes (*auloi*) – all considered by Athenian aristocrats as part and parcel of a respectable and enviable way of life. Graceful furnishings,

³³ So, Richardson Lear (2006a): 115: “Beautiful furnishing express a conception of human beauty that emanates like ripples from a stone dropped in water. The consequence is that every beautiful aspect of the built environment subtly contributes to the child’s developing sense of human excellence...”

music, paintings and the like are *for* and will seem *beautiful* to certain people who engage in certain cultured activities in the right sort of way. This idea seems a tacit premise of the argument at *Rep.* 401a-402a. It certainly explains why Socrates immediately narrows his concern with beauty from the total culture to its negotiation in pederasty, whose sympotic context had long been in the background; and why Socrates states that sexual contact indicates an older male not acting, in that thick phrase, “for the sake of noble ends” (τῶν καλῶν χάριν), showing himself aesthetically and ethically vulgar, “uncultured through music and poetry and inappreciative of beauty” (ἀμουσίας καὶ ἀπειροκαλίας, 403bc). Even if Socrates does not assume as a premise that graceful products are for and will seem beautiful to properly cultured individuals, the idea usefully reflects his tendency of thought that discriminations of beauty depend on cultural formation and are indexed to a culturally shared image of excellence. We can detect the same logic in advertisements – how beautiful the ‘simple’ life replete with rustic Ikea tableware! – or, negatively, in minimalist home décor that avoids the pretensions of the French manner. Such attitudes to artistic products express convictions about which styles of life are unbecoming as well as particular if indeterminate conceptions of a flourishing life. Plato appreciates that because ambient culture structures perception, evaluation, and desire, to encourage children to aspire to become a *kalos kagathos*, the material culture must be organized to reinforce that package of pursuits worthy of his (or, later, her) engagement and attention.

This thread of Socrates’ thought emerges most clearly from the guideline that the content and style of a myth, the rhythm (ῥυθμός), melodic tuning (ἁρμονία), and instruments of its musical accompaniment must all conform to the character of the virtuous person’s soul (*Rep.* 400de). As to style, it follows that one must neither listen to nor perform mimetic poetry that

depicts non-virtuous characters. Although the concern lies on its deleterious effects – and it is a difficult question precisely how *mimēsis* of these characters induces its negative effects³⁴ – notice that a central consideration in the argument is that a *kalos kagathos* would not partake in such mimetic acts. A *real kalos kagathos* (ὁ τῷ ὄντι καλὸς καὶ γαθός), Socrates states, impugning Athenian aristocrats and *nouveaux riches* democrats who illegitimately assume the title – would not debase himself to appear like an inferior through his words, voice, and gesture. More fundamentally, he would not seriously adopt a narrative style that requires or encourages appearing indiscriminately like all sorts of characters. Such a multiform style of narration threatens to undo an allegedly controlled, uniform and beautiful style of living (396b-397b, 399a-e). Despite its admitted pleasures, then, this brand of mimetic poetry and its awesome poet-performer are unwelcome in the ideal culture (397e-398b), least of all in the education of the young.

In sum, a material culture sustains an image of an exemplarily good person made vivid and attractive to a cultural imagination through its beauty. If and only if organized around the standard of a genuine *kalos kagathos* would the culture reflect and support a sense of beauty and with it an image of human excellence that would enable the young to recognize, embrace, and emulate role models who fit the general contours of that image. The superficial and attractive qualities of what *seems* beautiful make it pressing to ensure that one develops a correct conception

³⁴ One common view of *mimēsis* at *Rep.* 3 as emulation is that it involves an imaginative process by which the mind ‘enters inside’ the mentality of the speaker (so, most notably, Ferrari (1989): 108-9 and Halliwell (2002): 52, 74-6, 80). But see Richardson Lear (2011) for a persuasive proposal that *mimēsis* involves “likening oneself” (*Rep.* 393c) to a character just insofar as it seems outwardly like that character in posture, gesture, voice, word, and deed. Plato’s worry about the *mimēsis* of indecent people would then be that creating their appearance repeatedly and admiringly, “in seriousness” (σπουδῇ, 396e), eventually causes one pleasure in having their characteristic sort of habits.

of beauty and an ability to discriminate genuine from counterfeit appearances, real likenesses from “phantoms of virtue” (εἰδώλων ἀρετῆς, *Rep.* 600e). It is more pressing still to treat these goals in the context of pervasive images throughout a shared culture. We should consider further why that is so.

A useful first step is to observe that conceptions of human flourishing embodied in a culture often become our conceptions of *ourselves*. Plato is acutely aware that “it is the culture from which we derive our self-image” (Burnyeat (1999): 241). This observation brings us closer to the considerations of self-conception, shame and honour that I shall argue are central to the role of beauty in education for Plato. These considerations make clear that the self-images that concern Plato in the early stages of education are social not merely in that they are culturally acquired but more so in that they centrally involve communities of feeling and thought. I have approached the role of beauty in education from a concern over cultural images to shed necessary light on the importance of *shared* values to paradigmatic uses of the concept of the *kalon* and to the psychology by which an education in the *kalon* proceeds. The best way to develop this set of ideas is to attend to the connection for Plato between beauty, the means and end of musical-poetic education, and the principal target of that education, what the formal division of the soul at *Republic* 4 calls spirit (ὁ θυμός) or the spirited element of the soul (τὸ θυμοειδές).

§3 *Spirit and the Social Dimension of the Kalon*

Spirit is explicitly theorized first in Book 4 and later in Books 8 and 9 as a distinct source of human motivation alongside appetitive desires and reason, though, to be sure, Socrates grants that there may be others (*Rep.* 443d) and warns beforehand that this threefold psychological division is

imprecise (435c).³⁵ The later accounts distinguish appetites by love of money and reason by love of learning because these pursuits organize their characteristic desires. Appetites seek to gratify bodily pleasures notably of food, drink, sex, and some emotional upheavals (436a, 437c-e, 580e, 606a); reason desires to understand and to rule in light of deliberations about what is best overall (439cd, 442bc, 581b). Socrates distinguishes spirit itself, and someone most characterized by spirit, in terms of love of victory and honour (φιλονικία καὶ φιλοτιμία, 545a, 548c; cf. 548d, 550b, 551a, 553b, 554e-555a, 581a). The love of victory and honour centrally involve certain emotional dispositions, also attributed to spirit, presupposed by the concept of honour (τιμή): dispositions to experience and to endorse pride or high-mindedness at victory, shame at failure, and anger at perceived injustice, particularly the perception that one's status has been disrespected (440cd, 549d, 550b, 560a, 563d, 568e). Anger is the centrepiece of the account of spirit in Book 4. First and often characterized as that by which we get angry (ὃ θυμούμεθα, 439e),³⁶ spirit emerges in this account as a bellicose motivation that can be trained, like a child or a sheepdog, to defend rational judgments about what is best against appetitive temptations to do otherwise (440d-441a).³⁷

³⁵ I take as established that the three (or perhaps more: *Rep.* 443d) so-called 'parts' of the soul are each distinct sets of motivational, affective, and cognitive capacities. Throughout the *Republic*, motivation receives most emphasis but, I think for compelling reasons, is not sharply distinguished from these other capacities. Thus, appetite and spirit make something like beliefs and evaluative appraisals about their objects to various degrees of sophistication: see *e.g.*, 436ab, 441ab, 441e, 442ab, 571cd, 603b, 606ab. I leave aside the disputed question whether these capacities are robustly agent-like 'parts' in place of personal agency, *mere* metaphors, or *indispensably* metaphorical. Terminologically, I prefer 'kinds' to the traditional 'part' since *eidos* and *genos*, not *meros*, predominate.

³⁶ For spirit and anger, see also *Rep.* 436a, 440a-c, 441c; warlike at *e.g.*, 410d, 440a, 440d, 548b, 559a; ἀγανακτεῖν, a verb of distress, esp. anger (LSJ *s.v.* II.3) is collocated with θυμωθεῖς at 536c and implies spirit at 535e, 536c, 563d, 568e, and 604e.

³⁷ 'Child' is Aristotle's simile, likely with Platonic spirit in mind, when he compares a non-rational element sensitive to *logos* (persuasion?) to a child sensitive to the instruction of a parent or elder (*EN* I.13 1102b27-1103a1).

Socrates leads Glaucon to this conclusion by adducing cases like that of Leontius, who feels shame at his appetitive urge to leer at corpses, “reproaching himself and getting angry” (λοιδοροῦντά τε αὐτὸν καὶ θυμούμενον). In these cases, Socrates explains, “spirit becomes the ally of his reason” (σύμμαχον τῷ λόγῳ γιγνόμενον τὸν θυμὸν τοῦ τοιούτου, 440ab). The martial analogy stems from the fact that auxiliary guardians, tasked with supporting the dictates of philosopher-rulers, are characterized by and are metonyms of spirited motivation. The analogy is useful because Socrates stresses that, in terms of the psyche, it is through spirit that one possesses the courage, endurance, and aggression needed to support the rule of reason against the force of appetites, both in others but especially appetites within oneself (430ab, 435ab, 442a-c). The bellicose tendencies of spirit, if properly directed and subordinated to reason, are in this way necessary for cultivating and maintaining psychic order.

What unifies these various phenomena and what motivates their theoretical analysis in the first place? No doubt exacerbated by the fact that Book 4 characterizes spirit primarily as an *intermediary* between appetitive and rational elements, and in terms of martial virtues needed to protect a *polis* from domestic and foreign enemies, the seemingly diffuse nature of spirit has suggested to some scholars that this spirited element lacks any substantial coherence, to other scholars that Plato tailors his ethical psychology *ad hoc* to fit the famous analogy between *polis* and soul.³⁸ A number of recent commentators have rendered such dismissive interpretations untenable, however, by showing that Plato offers a coherent and well-motivated account of spirit and why, on that basis, this psychic element should receive principal attention in the guardians’

³⁸ Penner (1971): 111-13 and Robinson (1995): 44-6 argue both points. See Cornford (1912) and Nussbaum (1986): 272, 279 for the first, Williams (1973) for a version of the second.

primary education. These interpretations converge on two claims: that spirited motivation revolves around desires for esteem; and that the content of those desires depends on who and what one has been brought up to admire as *kalon*. The summary of Angela Hobbs is representative: “the essence of the human *thumos* is the need to believe that one counts for something, and that central to this need will be the tendency to form an ideal image of oneself in accordance with one’s conception of the fine and noble... society is also needed to provide the general content of one’s self-ideal” ((2000): 30-1).³⁹

On this general view, spirit is particularly receptive to cultural conceptions of what is beautiful and ugly and, because spirit admires and emulates others, primary education should primarily target spirit to direct its powerful non-rational motivations onto what merits admiration and emulation, what truly is *kalon*. The key component of this interpretation is the claim that some conception of the *kalon* is the formal object of spirited motivation.⁴⁰ There is, however, unfortunately little agreement as to how to understand this claim and what are its underlying motivations. This, I would suggest, is in no small part because the concept of the *kalon* has remained unanalyzed in this connection.

The most thorough interpretations divide into two. One emphasizes the role of spirit in regulating appetites for the sake of self-esteem or, as a variant on this theme, self-preservation. The best evidence for this interpretation is the case of Leontius whose spirit allies with rational judgment against the compulsion of his appetite to gaze at executed corpses. According to this

³⁹ Cf. also Cooper (1984).

⁴⁰ It is unclear to me whether Nehamas (2007b): 130-32 means – or needs – to reject this claim in arguing that *genuine* beauty initially affects spirit but is ultimately the proper object of *reason*, particularly if he is referring to the Beautiful itself in the *Symposium*.

interpretation, when Leontius cannot resist and rebukes his eyes to take their fill of the beautiful (*kalon*) sight (*Rep.* 440a), his ironic use of *kalon* betrays that he feels he has done something beneath himself and his desire to live up to his commitments. A second line of interpretation emphasizes the role of spirit in competitively seeking honour, status, or esteem from others.⁴¹ These commentators can most easily point to the political ambitions of the figure of the timocrat who, dominated by his spirit, adjusts his conception of the *kalon* to fit what wins popular approval (550b-551a). But this interpretation is also well-served by the example of Odysseus used at 441a-c (*Od.* 20.5-30, quoting li. 17), who quells his desire to slaughter the suitors and servant girls cavorting in his home *immediately* rather the following day as he had planned. His is not mere anger but noble indignation. Odysseus perceives his kingly honour disrespected in his own home.⁴² His reaction conforms to Aristotle's account of anger as a desire, accompanied by distress, for revenge for what seems an unjust belittlement (*Rhet.* II.4 1378a31-33). This interpretation of the Odysseus example could be bolstered by noting a parallel scene from Euripides' *Medea*. When Jason breaks his marriage oath to Medea, her spirit (*thumos*) rages and she plots to kill their two sons in retribution.⁴³ Her anger, too, is socially inscribed by revenge and, ultimately, the desire

⁴¹ Examples of the first camp include Cornford (1912), who makes focal self-respect; Gill (1996): 269: aspiration for ideals; Moss (2005): self-regard; Singpurwalla (2013): preservation of rational judgments. Hobbs (2000) is less easily placed but tends toward the first camp, Cooper (1984) (rpt. in (1999): esp. 133-34) toward the second by making competition focal. Clearer examples of the second camp include Cairns (1993): 381-91, Richardson Lear (2006a): 116-120, Burnyeat (2006): 9-12, Wilberding (2009), Brennan (2012), and Renaut (2014): 182-97, 249-60. None of the last three mentions the *kalon* in this connection, however.

⁴² The quoted line is "He struck his chest and spoke to his heart" (στῆθος δὲ πλήξας κραδίην ἠνίπαπε μύθῳ), quoted with the following line at 390d. θυμός, roughly equivalent to κραδίη, is used at II. 5, 9, 10, 38.

⁴³ The relevant line is li. 1079: her *thumos* is 'stronger than' her *bouleumata*. For analysis, see Rickert (1987): esp. 105 on reputation. Wolfgang Mann helped me to understand the relevance of this passage.

for glory that caps the peak of her heroic ethics. And should we worry that the cries of babies and animals, adduced as cases of spirit at 441a, present a problem for this interpretation, we would do well to recall not only that Plato is chiefly considering spirit as it occurs in *human beings* but also that the cries of babies and animals are at least proto-social. Babies scream at a parent for some milk, dogs bark at strangers to protect a home, and a lion – the emblem of spirit at *Rep.* 588d, as in the *Iliad* – without its pride to hear his kingly roar is a broken lion.

As the examples of Odysseus and Medea betray, an interpretation of spirit that emphasizes considerations of honour does considerable justice to the conceptual history and contemporary linguistic resonances on which Plato (and Socrates) consciously draws as he develops his account of spirit. The allusion to Odysseus particularly shows, but so does the primacy of love of honour and victory in Books 8 and 9, that Plato appropriates and innovates within a tradition of archaic and classical literature which posits *thumos* as the seat of ambivalent social (and thus also self-referential) emotions structured by the institution of honour, such as shame, fear, indignation, and pride.⁴⁴ Partly for this reason, and partly because it has attracted less extensive comment, I shall find it necessary to stress the sociality of spirit in what follows. But I am in a way more interested to reject the terms of the question that has divided recent commentators. The question is not whether spirit has the role the other ascribes to it, but *which* of those two roles is essential or primary. The question presupposes that the concerns of spirit are

⁴⁴ Renault (2014): 26-46 excellently summarizes this tradition. The next chapter discusses the significance of this appropriation for the content of poetry proscribed at *Rep.* 3. To this wider conceptual background we might add that the Platonic account of spirit draws on and criticizes specifically a bipartite psychology of pleasure and (or: *versus*) honour attributed to the Spartans by Athenian 'Laconizers'; cf. *Rep.* 410a-412a and 435e with Menn (2005): 34-38, esp. p. 35 for the intriguing suggestion that "Plato seems much more concerned to correct this simple bipartite psychology than he is to correct what is sometimes described as the Socratic unitary psychology."

primarily *either* social or internally- or self-directed.⁴⁵ It has thus seemed tempting to suppose that social aspects of spirit are *distinct* from considerations of self-esteem or self-regard rightly emphasized by various scholars. This temptation should be resisted. And I would like to show why that is by examining the way self-images and ideals of spirit are not merely formed through cultural immersion, but more importantly amount to collective identities that centrally involve self-presentation before others. An insight of Plato's use of *beauty* in primary connection with *spirit*, we shall see, is that a virtuous life requires identities of this shape.

What does the relation of the spirit to the *kalon* imply, on the one hand, about the psychology involved in spirited desire and in early aesthetic education and, on the other hand, about the concept of the *kalon* itself? Or to ask the prior question: why, structurally, should spirit aim at the *kalon*? My responses will evoke what I believe is a significant correspondence between the social nature of much spirited motivation and the social inflection of the concept of the *kalon*. The latter consists in its use to extol human conduct or character as outstanding among a community. One implication of what we might call the social traffic of the *kalon* is that we cannot understand its significance or that of spirit for Plato solely at the level of individual psychology or intrapsychic life. As we shall see, conduct or character can only show up *as kalon* against a rich background of social practices of shaming and honouring, and it is only by becoming attuned to and identified with the values embedded in these practices that one may pursue what is *kalon*.

⁴⁵ The assumption organizes Brennan (2012), esp. at 123 (self-directed and social concerns of spirit are "completely apart") and 125-26 ("which came first?"), though his concluding remarks move toward the more complex picture I defend below. Singpurwalla (2013): 46 reflects and herself depends on this dichotomy in accurately characterizing a concession that commentators tend to make: conceptions of the *kalon* are obtained from "social conceptions of value, *though the subject ultimately internalizes* these norms and values" (emph. added). This use of the metaphor of internalization is not innocent, as I suggest in §4 below.

My main contention shall be that beauty has a privileged place in musical-poetic education because it inculcates the sense of shame and honour necessary to become attuned to and pursue the beauty of virtue within the fabric of a social world. I focus in this section on the social background of shame, honour and the self-conceptions they presuppose. This must involve some discussion of the claim I develop further in §4, that spirited desire to do what is *kalon* is inseparable from the desire to *appear* outstandingly beautiful *before the eyes of others*. Following this line of thought, we may see that the attempt to prise apart self- and other-directed concerns of spirit errs in thinking that self-conceptions and ideals are divorced from social currents that shape us and focus our ethical lives. The central role of beauty to education ultimately reflects that Plato adopts a more promising picture on which virtue is a public affair pursued in community and contest with others.

If one outstanding question is what motivates the account of spirit in the *Republic*, the line of argument I develop provides a response: spirit addresses the fundamentally social nature of human psychology and its bearing on human flourishing.⁴⁶ One way spirit does so is by serving

⁴⁶ This is to explicate and defend a suggestion made with characteristic concision by Burnyeat (2006). It does not require that the account of spirit emerges from critical reflection on this score, particularly if social structures are ‘built into’ the concept of spirit. Better to suppose that the division of the soul corresponds to the conventional triad of pleasure, the *kalon*, and the good, and maps those correspondences onto another conventional distinction among lives devoted to money, honour, and wisdom. For the triad of values, cf. e.g., Theogn. 255, allegedly inscribed at Delos: “Most beautiful is what is most just, and best is health, and pleasantest of all is to obtain what one desires,” ‘corrected’ by Aristotle: *eudaimonia* is superlative in all three values (*EE* 1214a1-9, *NE* 1.8 1099a24-9); for the corresponding motivations structured toward these values, see *EN* II.3 1104b30-5. The following account outlines a distinctive social dimension of the *kalon*, which must be taken into account if we are to understand how the concept is both internally related and yet also irreducible to each of pleasure and the good: in connection to shame and honour, the concept incorporates *some* pleasures into a conception of a good life in view of a *shared culture*. Put slightly differently, primary uses of the *kalon* seem to register the experiential component of value (a ‘pole’ exemplified by pleasure) and its contribution to well-being (by the good), while demarcating a sphere of value between biological needs for (pleasures of) food or sex, which may seem independent of human

as the locus of cultural values, encapsulated in conceptions of beauty and ugliness, which bind an individual to a larger community. This community is the foundation on which a sense of honour and shame conceptually depend. To make a start in this direction, recall a compelling reason to think that musical-poetic education principally, though not exclusively, targets spirit: the main job of spirit is to receive and preserve values and beliefs that circulate within a community in the manner described above. Socrates compares the process to dyeing (*Rep.* 429d-430a). The guardians must absorb and hold fast convictions acquired through upbringing like a dye that not even the ‘detergents’ of pleasure and pain can wash out. The simile of dyeing, particularly as a *physical* process, indicates the cognitive limitations of spirit. It is non-rational and uncritical. Socrates emphasizes this point later by contrasting reason to the spirit manifest in children, animals, and the short-sighted anger of Odysseus (441ab). Here he emphasizes it by reference to the tenacity with which guardians must preserve convention. Their definitive virtue of courage depends on this perseverance, but it is precisely because spirit commits to values and beliefs without regard to whether or not they are rational or good that Socrates restricts the virtue of a guardian to a kind of *civic* courage (ἀνδρείαν... πολιτικήν γε, 430c). To reinforce the point that spirit is susceptible to as well as limited by acculturation, Socrates makes it clear that good guardians do not come readymade. Their natural spirited tendencies must be trained, just as white wool must be carefully prepared before being stained purple. In a long and difficult stretch of argument, Socrates explains that a central aim of primary education, including its gymnastic

sociality and (other) ‘goods,’ such as wisdom, which may seem unexhaustible by concrete forms that human sociality takes.

component, is to tame the violent tendencies of spirit so as to cultivate a delicate balance among spirited motivations.

I refer to *Rep.* 410c-412a. The passage discusses the use of music and poetry and gymnastic training to temper the spirited element of the soul so that it may become sufficiently gentle to welcome reason yet remain stalwart as courage demands. A mixture of the two is necessary, Socrates reminds Glaucon, to harmonize two sides of a dual nature that guardians must possess: a spirited side (τὸ θυμοειδές, *Rep.* 410d) and a philosophic side (ἡ φιλόσοφος, 410e; τὸ φιλόσοφον, 411e). One initial difficulty is how to construe these terms. Most translations misleadingly insert the term ‘part’ – ‘the spirited part’ and ‘the philosophic part’ – to pre-empt the formal psychology of Book 4, where this insertion has some but very slim textual support, and to align these psychological aspects with the spirited and rational elements of the soul respectively. Such translations assume or at least encourage us to think that these psychological models and their vocabulary correspond perfectly. They do not.⁴⁷ Whereas the Book 4 passage

⁴⁷ Socrates is partly to blame: *Rep.* 441e refers back to 411e-412a, obscuring some important discontinuities:

- (1) Whereas both passages refer to ‘the spirited’, the second substitutes ‘the rational’ (τῷ λογιστικῷ) for ‘the philosophic’ (τὸ φιλόσοφον). These are not identical. The latter refers not to the rational element of the soul but to a gentle aspect of one’s nature necessary for further education. In context it refers back to a capacity of dogs to love what one knows, evidence of gentleness alongside their spiritedness (375a-376b), on which see below.
- (2) Whereas both passages require a mixture of music and gymnastics to perform activities of tensing and relaxing (412a: ἐπιτεινομένῳ καὶ ἀνιεμένῳ; 441e-442a: τὸ μὲν ἐπιτείνουσα... τὸ δὲ ἀνιῆσα), it is unclear where gymnastics fits in at 441e-442a and unlikely that the objects of tension and relaxation are identical in both passages. At 441e-442a, tension occurs through beautiful speeches and studies (λόγοις τε καλοῖς καὶ μαθήμασιν), relaxation through exhortation by means of rhythm and harmony (παραμυθουμένη, ἡμεροῦσα ἀρμονία τε καὶ ῥυθμῷ). We would expect gymnastics to target the spirited element, but that would align it with relaxation, contrary to the role of gymnastics at 411de. To avoid this, we might take Socrates to mean that the mixture of music and gymnastic tenses and relaxes *both* rational and spirited elements together. The difficult τὸ μὲν... τὸ δὲ clause would then be rendered ‘on the one side... on the other side’ rather than ‘the one... the other’, as Brancacci (2005): 104-5 proposes. But then the objects of tension and relaxation differ from *Rep.* 411e-412a.

(439c-444b) analyzes the soul for the most part on a political model of warring factions, the discussion at 410c-412a and throughout Books 2 and 3 invokes musical and medical models in which musical tones or Hippocratic bodily humors can be mixed or balanced in various proportions. The pertinent difference for us is a subtle shift in vocabulary. τὸ θυμοειδές refers at this earlier stage to a ferocious tendency, the sort found in lions, bulls, and some dogs or people (Thracians and Scythians all!). Later treatments of spirit preserve this tendency, but they neither restrict the term τὸ θυμοειδές to it nor conceive of that tendency in opposition to a tendency towards gentleness with which it must be balanced. The appropriate balance yields a complex psychology that Socrates and Glaucon earlier identified in pedigree dogs. Guardians, like guard dogs, must be gentle to those they know – to what is *their own* (τὸ... οἰκεῖον) – and savage to those they don't – to what is *alien* to them (τὸ ἀλλότριον). Socrates had gone on to call these dogs philosophic and lovers of learning because they embrace or bark at people on the basis of recognition or ignorance (376b). A pun on 'knowledge' and 'learning', to be sure (φίλην... καταμαθεῖν... φιλομαθές), but it prepares us to locate terminology of the spirited, gentle, and philosophic at 410c-412a within the context of harmonizing opposed motivations of what is conceptualized in Book 4 as the spirited element of the soul.

Singpurwalla (2013): 49-50 depends on these passages to argue that reason, not spirit, is the principal recipient of beliefs in primary education, in order to explain why spirit is said to ally reason *by nature* (ἐπικούρον ὃν τῷ λογιστικῷ φύσει, *Rep.* 441a). Her argument, however, underappreciates the need to cultivate spirit (411c-e) and assumes without justification that the reference to rational calculation (τῷ λογιστικῷ) entails that spirit tends toward what is "truly fine" independent of acculturation (49, 51). Not only does this beg the question, but it overlooks a conceptual difficulty that aiming to be *kalon* or do *kala* has sense only against the background of practices of shaming and honouring, however exactly one chooses to relate to standards of evaluation within those practices.

The combination of music and poetry with gymnastic training follows traditional Athenian practice, though in treating gymnastic as a matter of conditioning a spirited element of the *soul* (*Rep.* 410bc), Socrates is surely criticizing Athenian preoccupations with cultivating a beautiful *body*. We might suppose that the formal connection Plato draws between spirit and beauty *psychologizes* the conventional association of gymnastic training with sculpting a beautiful body. In which case, the thrust of this passage is not simply to prioritize soul over body but to prioritize a less physical notion of trying to look beautiful. Whether or not we follow this route, however, the passage states the need to temper spirit through beauty while showing the way in which this value incorporates the aesthetic and ethical discriminations spirit is tasked to preserve. This is because the process of tensing and relaxing spirit so that it is both sufficiently gentle and savage is cast in ethically loaded gendered and political terms. One pole to avoid is the extreme of softness (*μαλακία*, *Rep.* 410de). The term connotes effeminacy. The Athenian male anxiety to avoid implications of being ‘softer’ (*μαλακώτερον*) than is orderly (*κόσμιον*) immediately calls for physical training in addition to music and poetry. On the other hand, without music or poetry, one becomes more savage or boorish (*ἀγριώτεροι*) than one should be, unwelcoming to reason and thus “unmusical” (*ἄμουσος*, 411d). Pay attention, please, to this last term. It refers back to the claims that someone devoted to athletics alone, who never “has contact with *mousikē* or *philosophia*” (*μουσικῆς δὲ καὶ φιλοσοφίας μὴ ἄπτητα*) or partakes of “discussion or the rest of *mousikē*,” fails to nurture whatever minimal rational capacities and potential love of learning he might have had (411cd; *cf.* 548b-e). But as we saw above, the term *ἄμουσος* intensifies the sense that such a person is *uncivilized* or *uncultured*. This suggests that the context in which to understand terms related to reason, wisdom, or learning at this stage of the argument is not, or

not primarily, high-minded intellectual pursuits. The specific context is rather the image of Athenian civic education as defined by Thucydides' Pericles, in contrast to Spartan devotion to martial training, by intellectual cultivation through discussion and cultural forms of leisure (Thuc. 2.39.1, 40.2-3). Hence the memorable claim, but also the need to stress, that Athenians are "lovers of beauty without extravagance and lovers of wisdom without softness" (φιλοκαλοῦμέν τε γὰρ μετ' εὐτελείας καὶ φιλοσοφοῦμεν ἄνευ μαλακίας, 40.1). More generally, these references to reason in connection with music and poetry speak to a wider Greek cultural conviction that a life without the Muses is not a genuinely *human* life. The controlling contrast here is between persuasion, characteristic of human beings, and force or violence, characteristic of non-human animals.⁴⁸ As Socrates explains, an unmusical person turns not to persuasion but to violence like a beast without rhythm and grace (ὥσπερ θηρίον... ἀρρυθμίας τε καὶ ἀχαριστίας ζῆ, *Rep.* 411de). He will literally be insensible, lacking the perceptual and affective capacities to be stirred by beauty.⁴⁹ Anaesthesia is an ethical failure, placing one forever beyond the pale of culture and political community.

Thus although, at one level, Socrates relies on the actual sonic properties of music to introduce rhythm and harmony into the soul, invoking psychosomatic effects of softening traditionally associated with beauty, the musical theory and fundamentally evaluative terms that

⁴⁸ See also Pl. *Leg.* 653e, *Prot.* 326b, *Phlb.* 62c (music is necessary "if our life is to be a *life* of some kind"); Cf. Eur. fr. 1028, 1033; Arist. *Thesm.* 159-60, *Kn.* 984-91, with Halliwell (2012) for insightful discussion. Contrast between persuasion and violence: Buxton (1982): 58-62, with ample citations.

⁴⁹ Note the reference to perception at *Rep.* 411d4, τῶν αἰσθήσεων αὐτοῦ, unfortunately ignored in the Grube/Reeve translation. It picks up on ἀμουσίας καὶ ἀπειροκαλίας, 403c. The rare noun ἀπειροκαλία, lack of experience and appreciation of beauty, reappears at 405b: this banausic condition (cf. Ari. *EN* II.7 1107b19: ἀπειροκαλία ... βαναυσία) makes one easily persuaded to take up a petty and shameful life exploiting legal loopholes.

organize this passage relate to the larger level of the structure of a life. Bridging these levels is an assumption that Socrates makes, following Damon of Oa (*Rep.* 400bc), that types of rhythms and harmonies express types of character dispositions and instil those dispositions into the souls of auditors through a homeopathic mechanism.⁵⁰ This is the physical or quasi-physical mechanism at work in Socrates' description of how listening *excessively* to *certain* types of music can make one's spirit too 'soft' (μαλακός). According to Socrates, the "sweet and soft" sounds of lyric odes and threnodies first soften whatever spiritedness (τι θυμοειδές) one has in him, making an iron-like and hard substance pliable and useful (411a). But if someone organizes his life around these delights, his spirit (τὸν θυμόν) melts and becomes weak, irritable, and "irascible from having been spirited" (note the perfect: ὁργίλοι ἀντὶ θυμοειδοῦς γεγέννηνται, 411bc). The implicit contrast Socrates means to draw is between a beneficial and necessary form of spirit, characterized by an effective sense of shame, and a debased form in which one is overcome by anger and unable to enforce moderation or self-control. The next chapter will examine in detail how this contrast works subtly to undermine Achilles as a cultural paradigm of both the beauty of male excellence and spirited motivation. Yet we might note for now that Socrates associates a weakened and irascible form of spirit unrestrained by the mechanisms of shame with the spirited ferocity specifically of Achilles: the final clause quoted above seems deliberately to echo Ajax's report at *Il.* 9.630 that, in spurning Agamemnon's truce, Achilles "has made savage the proud-hearted spirit within his body" (ἄγριον ἐν στήθεσσι θέτο μεγάλητορα θυμόν).⁵¹ The implicit

⁵⁰ So, slack and therefore low-pitched tunings such as the Ionian and Lydian make one 'soft' (398e). Damon's view is attested in Aristides Quintilianus, *De Musica* ii.80, 25-81, 3 (= DK 37 B7) and Athenaeus *Deipn.* XIV, 628c (= DK 37 B6). On Plato and Damon, see Pelosi (2010): 29-37.

⁵¹ Translations of the *Iliad* throughout follow or are modified from Lattimore (1951).

contrast between beneficial and debased forms of spirit can be persuasive, at least to the high-minded Glaucon, because the language of softness in which Socrates couches this psychological regression draws on Athenian male norms of beauty and anxieties about masculinity. What I wish to point out is that music is supposed to instil similar norms in people and in a culture by making the spirited elements of its auditors resemble the sort of character expressed in sound structures. The role of music in this passage thus contributes to the wider ideas that spirit passively receives conceptions of beauty impressed upon it and that spirit must be cultivated to maintain psychic integrity, binding the soul as a whole by *fiercely* restraining appetites while *gently* obeying reason *as its own*.

The dichotomy between what is its own and what is alien corresponds to the foundational sense the young will possess of what is beautiful in contrast to what is ugly. Socrates ensures the point is not lost on us. He uses the same emotional and perceptual vocabulary to make plain that just as dogs embrace their familiars (ὄν δ' ἄν γνῶριμον, ἀσπάζεται ... τό τε οἰκεῖον, *Rep.* 376ab), the young should recognize and embrace reason as beautiful through its familiarity (ἀσπάζοιτ' ... γνωρίζων δι' οἰκειότητα, 402a). This textual clue confirms that it is on account of spirit that one admires others, vies for honour, and feels shame at failures to conform to culturally sanctioned codes of beauty and ugliness. There are two implications to draw immediately.

The first is that although prevalent labels for the *kalon* such as the *admirable*, *honourable*, or *noble* rightly intimate its connection to shame and honour, they paper over the fact that this connection is both continuous with and based upon aesthetic and erotic components of primary education. In particular, they obscure the central importance of cultivating a sensibility and perceptual skills at 401b-402a *ff.*, skills which remain integral to ethical discriminations of

character and conduct involved in admiration or disgust. The non-aesthetic centre of these labels further suppresses the conviction at the heart of *Rep.* 2-3 that one conceives of what is *kalon* from the beautification of a total environment, the *images made* in a culture. But perhaps most significantly, if we rest content with these prevalent labels, we risk divesting ourselves of a rich philosophical landscape in which considerations of shame, self-presentation, and community belong centrally to a concept of beauty. One deep vein cutting through this landscape is the notion that one should *publicly* appear beautiful oneself by performing beautiful deeds. I shall return to this.

The second implication to draw concerns the question I posed earlier of why Plato must consider the problem of discerning genuine from false appearances of beauty a *cultural* problem. We may now better see that this is because what seems beautiful or ugly to someone as she matures depends significantly on how she has learned to classify and modulate appearances and behaviour within a world of shame and honour. The cultural problem gains in force from an aspect of the psychology of shame and honour, reflected in the affinity which spirit has for its own.

The aspect is best approached in terms of the fact that the shame or honour characteristic of spirit is parasitic on the existence of social practices of shaming and honouring. These practices involve collective agreement and contestation about which actions, pursuits, and characters are, centrally among others things, *kalon* or *aischron*. One way to see this is to notice that shame and honour attitudes have content and are intelligible only if a network of these practices and the

specific social relations they presuppose are already in place.⁵² This precondition builds a certain conservative tendency into spirit. The educational scheme in fact presupposes that one initially admires what others already admire and still others admire what one admires, and so on and so forth. This pattern of reinforcement makes it paramount to ensure that institutions honour what really is worth honouring, that their implicit conception of beautiful conduct and character accords with what really is beautiful. If this much is obvious, the underlying reason is not. The reason is not, as we might have expected, so much that one unreflectively attaches to cultural values. It is that spirit is not just unreflective, but essentially communal. In its affinity for its own, spirit is geared towards the social and shared. Whether its relations, its *oikeoi*, are fellow citizens (*Rep.* 375c, 463b) or family members and friends (572e), Socrates often refers to the way in which spirit seeks to preserve *group* values *as shared* values. These values and the group itself are understood, moreover, in opposition to some hierarchically lower group. Notice the habits of the timocrat, ruled by his spirit: he is gentle to free people but harsh towards slaves (548e-549a). Spirited attachments are based on and would seek justification from such considerations as what ‘we do’ (as opposed to *those* people), what (we) *real men* are like, or more politely but no less divisively, what ‘one does’ or what is *normal*.⁵³ These attachments work by exalting what is one’s own, praising it as *kalon*, while excluding what is alien as *aischron*. They regulate the boundary between what one will and will not countenance. This is all to make the familiar point that spirited

⁵² Soph. *Philoc.* 107 is instructive: it makes sense for Neoptolemus to ask Odysseus if it is not shameful to lie because specificities of shameful or admirable conduct require attunement to social practices.

⁵³ Well discussed by Brennan (2012): 115-17. I would add that the divisive logic of spirit is of a piece with the fact that the *kalon* is a contested concept saturated with class connotations, as the mentality of the timocrat makes plain.

attachments constitute a sense of self or identity. But we must take care not to forget that the relevant sense of self or identity is thoroughly social, constituted through participation, comparison, and contest with others.⁵⁴ In light of this, it is not simply because identities are shaped by cultural influences that Plato believes education is effective, as one commentator points out, “either on a large scale or not at all” (Wilburn (2015): 30), but because those identities are irreducibly social identities which ramify admiration and disgust in a network of shared sentiments.⁵⁵

The problem of educating spirit provides a special reason to emphasize its communal aspect. Its communal aspect is a precondition for sensitivity to honour and shame and, as part of this, for recognizing and pursuing beautiful deeds and character. Normal expressions of shame and honour depend on understanding, from the inside as it were, dynamics of praise and blame within a group, understanding oneself as a member of that group, and monitoring or modulating how one appears with reference to that group. This comes out clearly in the prospective or inhibitory sense of shame located in spirit, αἰδώς (*Rep.* 463d, 465a, 560a-d; *cf. Il.* 15.561, 661-62). James Redfield calls αἰδώς “a socializing emotion” because it is responsible for creating a community in which peers mutually respect one another’s and their own honour by upholding ethical standards of the group; if one is seen to disrespect another, one risks losing honour himself by becoming unworthy of respect ((1975): 158). The emotion is by definition shared, not private

⁵⁴ Here I have benefited from the model of “the self in dialogue” advanced lucidly by Christopher Gill (1996), according to which a human being in ancient Greek thought is or has a ‘self’ by becoming ruled by reason through ongoing ethical inquiry and interaction with others.

⁵⁵ Wilburn proposes only the first; his focus is on the effect of ‘the many’, described at *Rep.* 492c. Burnyeat (1999): 251-54 proposes the weaker reason that all members of a culture contribute to shaping it, though elsewhere (esp. at 240) he is more sensitive to group dynamics.

or solely personal. It embodies reciprocal attitudes and expectations. While the inhibitory force of αἰδώς depends upon how one wants not to be seen by others – a proverb has it that ‘αἰδώς is in the eyes’ – this force depends often on how one would regard others for the same reasons if they were to act in the same way (Williams (1993): 83).⁵⁶

Socrates depends on these reciprocal relations to establish the sort of community of feeling and thought that he claims political unity requires, in which each member treats the pleasures, pains, goods and evils of another as her own (*Rep.* 463de). But it is the general structure of shame and honour that concerns us, and this does not depend on such strong assumptions of political unity or homogeneity. What it requires is a confluence of self-esteem – that I may be ashamed or proud of some action of *mine* that reflects *me* in some interesting sense – and regard for the estimations of some group with which one is identified. We would mistake the psychology of these attitudes were we to suppose that it involves joining together, coincidentally as it were, two distinct elements or sets of concerns. For shame and honour involve identification with certain values only through group affiliation. Without both elements of this structure, one can neither be truly *ashamed* of oneself nor desire to be *worthy* of admiration, as a sense of honour requires. Otherwise praise and rewards will not count as honours, just as it is no victory for spirit to win an easy and unworthy contest.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ The proverb probably first referred to downcast eyes in shame, but even that involves the thought that others will see your eyes downcast, modestly. A parallel proverb, one of the 147 Delphic maxims, fastens onto the self-reflexive component of αἰδώς: ‘Respect yourself’, *seauton aidou* (Sosiades 129 in Stob. 3.1.173). I thank Mateo Duque for this reference.

⁵⁷ Suggested most of all by the comparison with Olympic victors at *Rep.* 465d.

The network of social and emotional relations signified by αἰδώς and similar spirited attitudes indicates a wider point which lay behind the conviction that one must be brought up in a beautiful culture to love genuine beauty, above all in the particularly loaded contrast this subsumes between an uncivilized beast and a graceful human being. The point is that, although for Plato there is an independent fact about what is *kalon*, one needs initiation into social institutions organized around status if character and conduct are to show up *as* beautiful, *as kalon* at all.⁵⁸ It follows from the fact that inasmuch as considering what is *kalon* and *aischron* involves expressions of shame and honour, one must understand and identify with (or at least refer to) patterns of esteem among a community. It is perhaps tempting to underestimate this point on the strength of the view that for Plato there are independent facts about what is beautiful, ultimately grounded in the form of the beautiful itself, and that he finds most social configurations largely in error by these lights. But from this it does not follow that the realm of the social is insignificant for Plato or not the primary level at which to address the role of beauty in his account of ethical development. It follows only, but fundamentally, that genuine beauty and truths about beauty must be embodied in the social institutions to which spirit becomes attuned and attached. These institutions are necessary for shaping and enriching natural attraction toward what seems beautiful as one matures. It is necessary to so shape them in order that one may be attuned to the beauty of virtue within the fabric of a social world.

If this is right, then one crucial role for spirit in the pursuit of virtue is to develop a sense of shame and honour which tethers one to the social community in which the concept of the *kalon*

⁵⁸ The inclusion of status is needed to differentiate spirited desires from socially conditioned appetitive desires, paradigmatically for money.

is transacted. We do well, I think, to consider in this connection the shame of an upstanding man (ἀνὴρ... ἐπιεικής, *Rep.* 603e) at grieving excessively the loss of his son. Socrates and Glaucon agree that he will resist his desire to grieve more so “when his equals can see him” (ὅταν ὁρᾶται ὑπὸ τῶν ὁμοίων) than “when he is alone in solitude by himself” (ὅταν ἐν ἐρημίᾳ μόνος αὐτὸς καθ’ αὐτὸν γίγνηται). By himself, Socrates supposes, he will risk wailing a lot, “which he would be ashamed of if someone might hear him (εἴ τις αὐτοῦ ἀκούοι αἰσχύνοιτ’), and he will do lots of things he would hide if someone were to see” (πολλὰ δὲ ποιήσει, ἃ οὐκ ἂν δέξαιτό τινα ἰδεῖν δρῶντα). The supposed benefit of shame in this case – here αἰσχύνη, not αἰδώς⁵⁹ – is that it countervails the compulsion to let oneself go in grieving, identified moments later as an appetitive hunger for tears (606a), and promotes instead the dictates of reason and law (λόγος καὶ νόμος) to fight this compulsion (604ab). Thus shame and spirited motivation more generally function as *necessary* checks on the excesses of appetites and their pleasures.⁶⁰ But the case also reveals further, as I have been arguing, the importance of social context to these psychological operations and their contribution to virtue.

⁵⁹ Attic Greek has two nouns commonly rendered by ‘shame’ in English: αἰσχύνη and αἰδώς. Although verbal forms of these two terms were used equivalently as early as Homer (*Od.* 7.305-6, 21.323-29), they are never fully equivalent. Williams (1993): 194 n9 correctly notes that the αἰσχύν- word group gradually becomes more dominant from the 6th-4th centuries BCE, but he elides their nuanced differences and ignores that the αἰδ- word group persists in classical usage. Cairns (1993) has shown that αἰδώς refers exclusively in Homer to a *prospective* condition that combines respect and what we tend to call a sense of shame and includes affective tones of fear, awe and reverence. This use remains most common (e.g., αἰδώς for Homer at *Rep.* 595b), especially in connection with respect for (aristocratic) convention, though by the classical period αἰδώς can refer, as does αἰσχύνη, to present or past behaviour that one finds shameful. αἰσχύνη is more flexible, used for prospective and retrospective experiences of shame and for a sense of shame alike. See Konstan (2006): ch. 4 for further discussion.

⁶⁰ See Moss (2005) and Brennan (2012). If my interpretation is cogent, however, Brennan should not restrict the value of spirit to “opposing appetite” (112). His view stems from approaching spirit from the rather different and intriguing perspective of cosmogony, based in *Tim.* 69e-70c and *Rep.* 611ab.

Notice first that shame is thought to conduce to virtue in this passage precisely because shame involves concern for how one is perceived by others, if only by peers whose opinions one respects. We would miss this point if we supposed, as a prevalent view of shame would have us suppose, that shame is concerned *solely* with what others see and say. On this conception, shame would be ethically beneficial only to the extent that fear of disgrace from what others see and say might lead one (incidentally, we are to suppose) to behave virtuously.⁶¹ However, if our upstanding man has any ethical deficiency at all – it is unclear whether he violates a conviction not to grieve in private – it is presumably not that he cares about the opinions of others but that his sense of shame is not sufficiently motivating. In my view, this passage constitutes praise of shame, not a backhanded compliment to it. Part of the praise rests on the idea that shame attunes one to social configurations that can in principle gauge right conduct: notice that imagining oneself before peers promotes exactly what reason and *law* or *custom* demand. These social configurations presuppose the sorts of discriminations between pleasures that one acquires in primary education, between pleasure as such and pleasure appropriate to enjoy, what a culture sanctions as *kalon* rather than *aishchron*. That social configurations can in principle gauge right conduct seems to be presumption of Socrates and Glaucon, at any rate, whose image of an *upstanding man* presupposes their own social practices and tacit conception of beautiful or ugly conduct. This presumption, but also the tenor of the above passage, I believe, suggests a richer connection between shame and virtue than simply maintaining psychic integrity by regulating appetites. Quite apart from this largely negative orientation, I would suggest that shame

⁶¹ Lorenz (2006): 62-3 adopts a version of this reading. But this impoverished conception of shame exerts subtle and surprisingly wide influence, as I discuss in §4 of this chapter.

positively contributes to virtue because a concern for virtue involves some concern for how one is perceived by relevant others. I will say more about this below, but we may already begin to see from this passage that, for Plato, it is not merely that spirit can in principle conduce to virtue when the social world onto which it is trained embodies correct values. A stronger and more fundamental thought is that the social world onto which spirit is trained must serve as a reference point in our views of ourselves and our aspirations to live well.⁶² This provides a richer explanation why spirit must be oriented toward genuine beauty.

The formal connection between spirit and the *kalon* emerges more fully from the regulative force of the concept of the *kalon* in Athenian practices of shaming and honouring. Here we need to consider as far as possible what speakers are *doing* when they employ the concept of the *kalon* and what contextual background enables them to do that. The force of the *kalon* and the *aischron* is not simply useful for conditioning children through praise or blame early on in their development. It runs far deeper and to a much more essential idea. When Socrates encourages guardians to vie for reputation, memorialization, and other splendid tokens of honour that reward beautiful victories (καλλίων, *Rep.* 466a) – he can hardly omit rewards in his case for justice as Glaucon had requested – he speaks to the idea that the *kalon* labels *outstanding* human achievement or the outstanding quality of honours which reward that achievement.⁶³ There are

⁶² Renaut (2014): 140 is apt in his discussion of *Rep.* 604a: “chacun, la plupart du temps, cède à une forme de mise en scène du ‘moi’, supposant toujours un dehors qui juge et condamne, dont la vertu dépend.”

⁶³ Honours as *kalon*: φιλοτιμίας τῶν καλῶν, 554e; prizes, rewards, and gifts for the just person are *kalon* (ἀθλά τε καὶ μισθοὶ καὶ δῶρα... καλὰ, 614a); Cf. Thuc. 7.86.2: καλὸν τὸ ἀγώνισμα. Aristotle connects honour and the *kalon* at *Rhet.* I.9 1366b34-5, 1367a23-4, 1367b11-12; *EN* X.8 1169a31-5, *MM* 1249a1-7; particularly striking is *Pol.* VII.13 1332a16-17: actions aiming at honours and resources are *kallista*.

two sides to this coin: what is outstanding and the background against which it stands out. Both figure importantly in the relation of spirit to the *kalon*.

Consider, for example, Isocrates' incredibly effusive praise (15. 107-25) of the Athenian general Timotheus. His military expertise is summed up in terms of his "outstanding judgment" (τὸ τοῦ καλῶς βουλευσασθαι, 118) and ability to organize and use forces "admirably" (χρησθαι καλῶς, 119), referring to how Timotheus impressively took several positions in the Peloponnese and Asia Minor with comparably few ships and funds, advancing Athenian power and prestige without taxing the Athenians. Isocrates describes at length this brilliant and attractive display of skill. What matters most is that his praise as *kalon*, rather rare in the *Antidosis*, is reserved for someone whose deeds are said to *show* that he excels all other men (112, 119). But that is not all. Part of what constitutes Timotheus' brilliant excellence for Isocrates is that it advances shared Athenian interests. Now Isocrates likely stresses this detail because his own image is at stake through his association with Timotheus (101). But it illuminates the basic fact that one earns distinction only against a background of shared understandings and values embodied in practices of praise and blame. Implicitly, as appropriate to the hierarchical logic of spirit, these values are reinforced by contrast to what is disdained, or what one claims should be disdained, as ugly and shameful. This is more explicit when Demosthenes defends his policy to protect the Hellespont from Philip of Macedon:

It exhibited to all men the *kalokagathia* of Athens and the depravity of Philip. For he, the ally of the Byzantines, was besieging them before the sight of all men: could anything be uglier and more repulsive?

(Dem. 18.93)

παῖσιν ἔδειξεν ἀνθρώποις τὴν τε τῆς πόλεως καλοκαγαθίαν καὶ τὴν Φιλίππου κακίαν. ὁ μὲν γὰρ σύμμαχος ὦν τοῖς Βυζαντίοις πολιορκῶν αὐτοὺς ἑωρᾶθ' ὑπὸ πάντων, οὗ τί γένοιτ' ἂν αἰσχίον ἢ μισώτερον;

Notice the emphasis on sight and the nature of the *kalon* as *appearance*: it shines forth into clear and public view to compel (erotic) admiration. Such appearance is the ontological basis for its conceptual connection to shame and honour. These attitudes centrally involve considerations of how one may seem to others; and such considerations serve to bind a community around conceptions of beauty and ugliness insofar as these values are considered publicly available and to reflect what ‘everyone’ can see. It is clear from Demosthenes that it would be too simplistic to interpret this idea as a report of the consensus of a group, yet nor as a Kantian demand for universal assent to a pure judgment of taste. Somewhere between these possibilities, the rhetoric of the *kalon* attempts to mobilize and to produce shared evaluations among a group, partly through the pressure of the claim that everyone in the group does share those evaluations.

I have thus far been detailing the social background against which conduct and character stands out as *kalon* to show how it informs the collective values and identities proper to spirit. What of outstanding conduct or character itself? Here lies a more fundamental relation to spirit. Scholars who suggest that spirit exemplifies a natural human desire to be admired intimate an important reason, which the regulative force of the *kalon* brings out, why spirit should formally aim at the *kalon*. Central to spirit is the desire to *appear outstanding* in and to a group.⁶⁴ We have

⁶⁴ Here I agree with Richardson Lear (2006a): 117-18, though I would hesitate to base this point on the view that spirit pursues “beautiful things because they *manifest* goodness” while reason does so “because they *are* good.” Richardson Lear seems to infer this view from *Rep.* 505d: that most people are content with what seems (τὰ δοκοῦντα) just or beautiful, but seek what really is good. But desire to appear good is distinct from desire for what appears good, though of course these are connected; and Socrates himself is not careful to retain his distinction between *doing* and *acquiring* what *seems* beautiful, τὰ δοκοῦντα... πράττειν καὶ κεκτηῖσθαι when he comes to consider acquiring the good.) More substantially, we cannot neatly distinguish spirit from reason and beauty from the good along the lines of appearance and being. Reason must love the appearance of beauty if it loves beauty at all. The relevant upshot of *Rep.* 505d, I believe, is that reason would not do so unquestioningly.

already met this desire in the guardians' competition for the honour accorded to the best and most beautiful life; in the case of Odysseus wanting to reveal his kingly status and have it recognized by the suitors; and in the timocrat, whose admittedly deficient spirit leads him to adjust his conception of the *kalon* to fit popular esteem of wealth, his love of honour essentially devolving into love of fame. And although Plato does not mention this, for crucial reasons I examine in the next chapter, the concept of spirit would have readily called to mind Achilles striving for glory, aiming to show his excellence and have it made to shine forth in the collective imagination of future generations. Emphasis here, as before, belongs on *appearing*. Again much depends, for spirit at least, on the radiance and visibility of the *kalon*. Because the concept is essentially tied to appearance, to aim to do something under the guise of the *kalon* necessarily involves consideration of how one outwardly seems or imagines one seems to others.⁶⁵ As Phaedra pronounces in Euripides' *Hippolytus* (403-4), as she explains her decision and resolve to take her own life, "Just as I want people not to forget my beautiful (καλά) deeds, I don't want plenty of witnesses to my shameful ones (αἰσχρὰ δρώση)," a sentiment that need not reflect undue reliance on popular opinion, though Phaedra is concerned with that too.⁶⁶ The *appearance*

⁶⁵ Consider in this regard *Gorg.* 474d-475b. The refutation of Polus is commonly thought to equivocate between the perspective of a spectator (τοὺς θεωροῦντας) and that of an agent or patient in judging whether a beautiful item is pleasant or beneficial. Perhaps this is because, as Tarnopolsky (2010): 72 suggests, the concept and experience of the *kalon* involves entertaining the gaze of real or imagined others while considering oneself as an agent. It is a mistake, at any rate, to try to fix the perspectives of spectator and agent so rigidly as to insist that all pleasure in the *kalon* at *Gorg.* 474d-475b is solely observational. The temptation to do so comes from a purely spectator-based model of aesthetics.

⁶⁶ For a common view that Phaedra overly concerned with reputation, see, e.g., Williams (1993): 96-8. Disagreement has turned on the puzzling li. 385: αἰδῶς τε. δισσαὶ δ' εἰσὶν, ἢ μὲν οὐ κακή. If Phaedra distinguishes a good and a bad kind of αἰδῶς – as Williams most subtly has it, a shame that depends *solely* on fear of conventional opinion and a shame that does not (225-228) – she is confessing at ll. 375-87 to have followed the bad kind. If, as Kovacs (1980) argues, the distinction is between good and bad kinds of pleasure (δισσαί referring to ἡδοναί at li. 383), αἰδῶς being of the good kind, these lines may bespeak

of the *kalon* is not simply the ontological basis, but the motivational basis of its role in shame and honour.

One implication is that a desire to appear outstanding is built into the pursuit of virtue. It is ultimately from this side of motivation, the pursuit of beautiful deeds, that we should understand why dimensions of beauty and spirited attachment to the *kalon* are paramount in education. My proposal is that we understand this pursuit as one both in community and in contest with others. If this is promising, then the notion, as Plato later puts it suggestively, that one needs “ambition for virtue” (φιλότιμος ἐπ’ ἀρετῇ, *Leg.* 5.744e) expresses a good deal more than the thought that the road to virtue is difficult, paved with sweet temptations, and so requires motivational energies of spirit to combat appetites. It expresses a decisive role in ethical life for the love of honour and the social configurations that support it. To be sure, a life organized around honour is not the most nourishing for Plato. Its spirited desires must be subordinated to reason and put in service of a notion of virtue that extends beyond and requires criticism of the values and institutions into which one is socialized. But to subordinate spirit to reason is not to reject love of honour *per se*, only its unbridled or misdirected forms. It is to modulate love of honour. It is thus to preserve, albeit also to transform, a set of psychological and conceptual connections woven into a long tradition of Greek ethical thought beginning with Homer according to which virtue (ἀρετή) implies a glorious reputation and so the pursuit of virtue presupposes a concern to be recognized as outstanding.⁶⁷

greater integrity. Note II. 413-15: her conception of the *kalon* precludes adulterous behaviour while pretending to be chaste.

⁶⁷ This interpretation gains support from its kinship with Aristotle. Even though, like Plato, Aristotle subordinates honour to virtue because it depends more so on others giving honour than on the one

There is an essential idea in this area, the idea that virtue is beautiful. That virtue is beautiful embraces the difficulty of its pursuit and the exemplarity of its achievement; the maxim attributed to Solon that beautiful, *kala*, things are difficult makes this explicit (*cf. Hip. Mai.* 305a). We may also gather that this means it is open to public view, not hidden. But that would not do justice to the incredible emphasis on spectatorship and radiance in the striking claim that a true *kalos kagathos* would be “the most beautiful sight for anyone who is able to see” (κάλλιστον θέαμα τῷ δυναμένῳ θεᾶσθαι, *Rep.* 402d). There is much that is altogether unfamiliar in this idea. We are poorly equipped to appreciate all that it encompasses, let alone its implication that one should desire to be so radiant oneself. The reason is that the relevant conception of virtue presupposes a notion of appearance that we have become accustomed to dismiss as ontologically and ethically problematic. Such dismissal owes to a certain conceptual framework which, I now want to suggest, animates much recent discussion of the nature of spirit and its relation to the *kalon*, dividing scholars along the lines of its main faults. Let me approach the issue on the bias.

§4 *Before the Eyes of Others*

I have been arguing that one significant but largely neglected reason why the *kalon* governs primary education for Plato is that this concept is the currency of practices and experiences of honour and shame to which one must become sensitive if one is to become virtuous. This sensitivity constitutes a second stage of ethical development that works by a kind of bootstrapping procedure. From natural attraction to beauty develop more complex attitudes

honoured, he does not drive a wedge between these pursuits. He assumes – perhaps more naively than Plato – that those who seek honour want to be honoured for their virtue by the right crowd (*EN* I.5 1095b25-30; *Cf.* IV.3 1124b28). Shame properly has the same structure: *Rhet.* II.6 1384a24-27.

toward beauty and ugliness structured by social institutions and identities revolving around shame and honour. My account places the concept of the *kalon* in a more social register and places spirited motivation in a more positive ethical role than most commentators have allowed, plausibly because it has seemed to many that the terms of appearance at this level of explanation are not imperative to the pursuit of virtue. One plausible reason for such an impression is that there is a tendency to suppose that, even if spirit desires to *appear* outstanding, this must be incidental: a virtuous person rather desires to *be* outstanding, and that is all. Indeed we might consider it the lesson of Glaucon imagining the perfectly just man, who pursues justice for its own sake and not the sake of reputation (*Rep.* 361b-d), that virtue is divorced from concern for how one is regarded.⁶⁸ To the extent one cares about appearing before others, one would then seem ethically immature, satisfied as might be a child by rewards.

This line of thought rests on a mistaken assumption that we can, and that Plato did, clinically separate social and self-directed concerns. It will not seem a mistake, indeed it will seem compulsory, from within a framework which treats the social as a realm of appearances in strict opposition to reality, on the one hand, and to an interiorized and moralized conception of the self, on the other hand. This framework does not belong to Plato. It is by now something of a banality, though one which bears reminder, that the conception of the self in question and its filiation to an autonomous sphere of *morality* are not present in ancient ethical thought, at the very least not in any crystallized form or with any strong force. The point has been treated

⁶⁸ This thought deepens with Glaucon's allusion at *Rep.* 361b to Aesch. *Sept.* 592: Amphiaraus wants to *be* the best, not to be believed to be. Glaucon substitutes *agathos* for *aristos*, thus making a point less germane to our consideration of the aims of spirit than the original.

alternatively as a deficiency or as a benefit in various histories of ethics.⁶⁹ It must of course be admitted that Plato believes that one can put too much stock in the opinions of others, and that this is a perennial and dangerous ambiguity to which spirit lends itself; and that, by contrast, human reason is suited to and should ideally assimilate itself to objects independent of any particular social order. But Plato could never have made *decisive* or articulated in precisely the same way the distinctions that Kierkegaard, as Montaigne and Kant before him, was at pains to make in asking, “What is it to be more ashamed before others than before oneself but to be more ashamed of seeming than of being?” ((1993 / 1847): 53).⁷⁰ Plato could not make precisely this distinction between appearance and being because he did not have the relevant distinction between inner and outer, still less the moral dichotomy overlain onto both. One significant way to sharpen the contrast is to emphasize that virtue for Plato is a *public* rather than a private affair, and that the public nature of virtue ultimately explains why beauty, in all its radiance, and the social inflections of spirit become vital to education. Or so I shall argue. But I would like to come to this point by first considering just how far Plato would find it misguided to separate self- and other-directed concerns.

⁶⁹ Most impressive on this distinction, to my mind, are Williams (1985) and (1993), for whom *morality* is a species of *ethics* that can and has been pursued to the exclusion of other determinants of ethical life, not unlike the relationship between *Moralität* to *Sittlichkeit* for Hegel. This is not to say that there are not significant similarities between ‘ancient ethics’ and ‘modern morality’, emphasized notably by Annas (1992), or that their distinction cannot be enriched by the sort of comparative studies of ancient Greek thinkers and Kant pursued in several excellent contributions to Engstrom and Whiting (1996). It is only to guard against obscuring or minimalizing what seem to me significant differences. The penetrating study of Taylor (1989) documents affiliated differences in conceptions of the self.

⁷⁰ Nor is it exactly the distinction attributed to Democritus (DK 68 B244): “Be ashamed (*aischunesthai*) much more before yourself than others.” I allude above, in an admittedly general way, to Montaigne’s “On Vanity” in his *Complete Essays* III.9 and to the framework of Kant’s *Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals*.

Bernard Williams has exemplarily shown that the ancient Greek experience of shame is psychologically too complex and ethically too rich to allow any such simple dichotomy. The story of Leontius by which Socrates distinguishes spirit from appetite affords a fascinating if perplexing case in point. Coming up from the port of imperial Athens, Leontius (appropriately named: ‘Lion-like’) feels ashamed at his desire to gaze at executed corpses lying along the northern wall. What deserves notice is that the story is as much about the eyes of others as about Leontius’ own.

But I once heard a story, and I believe it, that Leontius, the son of Aglaion, was going up from the Piraeus along the outside of the northern wall when he saw some corpses lying at the executioner’s feet. He desired to look at them but at the same time he was disgusted and turned himself away.⁷¹ For a time he struggled and covered his face, but finally, overpowered by the desire, with eyes pushed open wide he rushed towards the corpses and said, “Look for yourselves, you evil wretches, take your fill of the beautiful sight!”
GLAUCON: I’ve heard that story myself.

(*Rep.* 439e-440a)

ἀλλ', ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ποτὲ ἀκούσας τι πιστεύω τούτῳ: ὥς ἄρα Λεόντιος ὁ Ἀγλαΐωνος ἀνιών ἐκ Πειραιῶς ὑπὸ τὸ βόρειον τεῖχος ἐκτός, αἰσθόμενος νεκροὺς παρὰ τῷ δημίῳ κειμένους, ἅμα μὲν ἰδεῖν ἐπιθυμοῖ, ἅμα δὲ αὖ δυσχεραίνει καὶ ἀποτρέποι ἑαυτόν, καὶ τέως μὲν μάχοιτό τε καὶ παρὰκαλύπτειτο, κρατούμενος δ' οὖν ὑπὸ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας, διελκύσας τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς, προσδραμών πρὸς τοὺς νεκρούς, ‘ἰδοὺ ὑμῖν,’ ἔφη, ‘ὦ κακοδαίμονες, ἐμπλήσθητε τοῦ καλοῦ θεάματος.’
ἤκουσα, ἔφη, καὶ αὐτός.

The story is meant to show that anger sometimes wars against appetites “as one being against another” (440a), a reference to the principle that the same thing cannot desire or undergo opposites in the same respect in relation to the same thing at the same time (436b).⁷² Socrates was

⁷¹ Allen (2000): 252 renders ἀποτρέποι ἑαυτόν ‘was repulsed at himself’. This is possible. But the emphatic use of the active verb with a reflexive object seems more so to suggest ‘turned himself away.’

⁷² Glaucon does not immediately recognize the distinction between spirit and appetite, unsurprisingly, since the two are etymologically connected (θυμός and ἐπιθυμία) and since the powerful affections of spirit share the strong physiological quality associated with appetites and their objects. Allen (2000): 252-53 provides a third reason: Athenian ideology promoted anger as a *desire* for revenge, and so Glaucon is unprepared to distinguish a general term for desire and the species of desire responsible for anger.

careful to advert to this principle in the story, but he used it to emphasize not anger, but disgust: the deliberate and balanced ἅμα μὲν ... ἅμα δέ clause at 439e calls attention to how Leontius is disgusted by the corpses at the same time he is attracted to them. The anger Socrates refers to is involved in Leontius' shame at his desire to gaze at the corpses, suggested by his attempt to hide by covering his head (παράκαλύπτειτο). Why Leontius wants to gaze at the corpses and why he is ashamed are elusive. Commentators have by and large groped for a sexual explanation, almost as prurient as the desire it attributes to Leontius, according to which he is ashamed at being titillated by the pallor of the corpses or the prospect of necrophilia.⁷³ But this interpretation lacks textual support and pays scant attention to the punitive context. More promising is that Leontius savors the morbid thrill of the public spectacle but finds it indecent to linger over the sight. The corpses are exposed for people to notice, but *only* to *notice*, what happens to the worst offenders in imperial Athens.⁷⁴

Whatever the psychological details, what is involved in this experience of shame connects to what is involved in his bitterly ironic and very public cry that his eyes take their "fill of the beautiful sight." Leontius feels he has done something beneath himself. His ironic use of *kalon* expresses as much, labeling not just the corpses but his attitude towards them ugly. This comes out further from the use of the passive participle κρατούμενος to capture the rich

⁷³ So, for example, Adam (1902) n. *ad* 439e, Burnyeat (2006): 10 n14, Lorenz (2006): 260. This reading is based on an emendation of a comic fragment by Theopompous (PCG Theopompus 25 = CAF 24) preserved in the scholia to Aristophanes' *Birds*.

⁷⁴ This interpretation is closest to Ferrari (2007): 181. Ferrari adapts the excellent insight of Allen (2000): 245-46, 251-52 into the political and historical context; her own view is that Leontius exults in the spectacle as a display of retribution but also rejects Athenian ideology of retributive justice. For a criticism of both interpretations and an intriguing suggestion based on an appetite to grieve in pity, see Liebert (2013).

phenomenology by which Leontius first experiences *himself* as overruled by some alien *force*; and then, despite or perhaps due to feeling a loss of power, becomes identified to some degree with his appetite, *actively* pushing his eyes wide (διελκύσας) and rushing (προσδραμών) to get a closer look. This experience reflects how his shame discloses values which delimit who he is and what he can live with, and it motivates him, though ineffectually, to live up to that image. The concept of beauty is central to these mechanisms. It firstly introduces discriminations between pleasures, distinguishing the kind of life one admires from one cast as shameful, or more particularly as uncivilized or beastlike; it is not for nothing that Leontius is described notably as struggling against what seems to him some *force*.⁷⁵ But such discriminations serve primarily to ennoble, to elevate. A beautiful self-image in shame attracts one toward those aspects of oneself with which one is identified or wants to identify. Socrates seems to rely on the phenomenology of this sort of experience to make plausible his claim that spirit is “by nature the auxiliary of his reasoning” (ἐπίκουρον ὃν τῷ λογιστικῷ φύσει, *Rep.* 441a). He is gesturing to the way shame, for example, supports what an agent considers her overall good, whatever it may be. Yet he also has in mind the normative idea of how, if one is properly reared in beauty, an ennobling self-image in shame can attract one away from what one considers an ‘uncivilized’ hedonism and toward a fully human nature ruled by reason, aimed at its more nourishing pleasures.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ *Rep.* 560d-561b and *Hip. Mai.* 299ab rely on shame to distinguish pleasure as such and the *kalon*. The point about discrimination among pleasures is corroborated by the use of shame in the *Gorgias*, well discussed by Moss (2005) and Tarnopolsky (2010). The refutation of Callicles turns on how he fancies himself so manly and powerful as to be shameless (*Gorg.* 494de), but this depends on having a strong sense of shame: hence he bristles at the mention of the catamite. Callicles would then seem hardly the ‘amoralist’ he is sometimes taken to be, but a fine exemplar of a political ideology of masculinity; cf. Demosthenes’ speech against Meidias at Dem. 21.

These aspects of the case of Leontius reinforce the point that, in the words of Williams, “the Greeks’ understanding of shame... was strong and complex enough to dispose of the familiar criticism that an ethical life shaped by it is unacceptably heteronomous, crudely dependent on public opinion” ((1993): 97). Williams refers us to what remains a prevalent conception of shame on which shame depends on fear of external sanctions, such as the reproach of witnesses, and is thus ethically immature. This conception of shame, expressed in classical studies with particular intensity by E.R. Dodds and Arthur Adkins, owes to the broadly Kantian framework sketched above. It presupposes a distinction between shame and guilt that would have us consider shame a ‘nonmoral’ or deficiently ‘moral emotion’ because it consists in negatively evaluating oneself as a whole in light of ‘external’ public sanctions; whereas guilt is always a moral emotion in which one negatively evaluates particular actions in light of an ‘internal’ and individual conscience.⁷⁷ There are consequences for how one interprets the value of the *kalon*. One will be inclined to interpret it, as Adkins did, as solely a matter of “popular approval” ((1960): 260). Adkins, following Dodds, Bruno Snell, and other so-called progressivist historians, took this alleged cluster of ideas to signal that ancient Greeks belonged to an early

⁷⁶ Cf. *Rep.* 589cd: “this is also the basis of the conventions about what is beautiful and what is ugly: what is beautiful is what subordinates the beastlike element in our nature to the human one – or better, perhaps, to the divine, whereas what is ugly is what enslaves the tame element to the savage.” Note how the *kalon* and the *aischron* are tied to conventions about them. *Rep.* 443e may weakly retain this connection in qualifying that the just person should *call* beautiful and just what preserves psychic harmony. Shame is dramatized in the light of the contrast between beastlike and divine at *Phdr.* 254ab; see *Ion* 542b and *Ari. EN* IX.8 1168b22-5 for similar use of *kalon*.

⁷⁷ E.R. Dodds applied the Margaret Mead’s antithesis of shame and guilt cultures to his landmark study, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1951): esp. ch. 2. It persists today, though often in less stark forms, e.g., the views of shame in Rawls’ *A Theory of Justice* (1971): 386-91. It continues to influence classical scholarship. Sarah Broadie uncharacteristically equates shame with “fear of what others will think” as opposed to “the moral person’s autonomous sense of what would be shameful” ((2002): 323-24 *ad. Ari. EN* 3.8). Singpurwalla (2013): 64 can still easily align spirit with “self-interest” *in contrast* to “morality.”

stage of ethical development in which “facts are of much less importance than appearances” and a “self only has the value which other people put on it” (48-9), with Plato and Aristotle mediating the slow march toward a morality of guilt centred around the concept of the will. The progressivist history no longer holds much sway, but its conception of shame – and parallel conception of honour as merely for reputation – remains alive and well, despite criticism from many sides within philosophy, psychology, and anthropology. The most relevant criticism for present purposes, reflected in Williams’ use of the term ‘heteronomous’, is that it presupposes a problematic notion of autonomy that ignores the ways ethical experience depends on contingently formed identities within a social group.⁷⁸

Most relevant, because it allows us to diagnose that by ignoring or deemphasizing the social characters of shame, spirit, and the concept of the *kalon*, some scholars have recoiled too far in the opposite direction of Adkins, leaving his topology entirely in place. Just as it is problematic to assume that shame and honour are independent of an agent’s commitments, it is equally problematic to assume that their ethical significance and the concept of self they delimit can be fully described without reference to how an agent thinks she stands in relation to others or to social practices on which those relations depend. This is the lesson in the shame of Leontius: seeming beautiful to oneself is intimately bound to seeming beautiful before the eyes of others.

⁷⁸ Cairns (1993): 14-47 arrives at a similar conclusion. See also Taylor (1985), Calhoun (2004), and Velleman (2005): ch. 3 for rich, though divergent, discussions of shame in the Anglophone philosophical literature. Deonna Rodogno, and Teroni (2012) provide a clear overview of the conceptual issues, though I find their argument against the essential sociality of shame unpersuasive and to sit oddly with their claim that ‘self-relevant values’ of *reputation* and *privacy* are central to shame (143, 152). Velleman’s focus on self-presentation is well-suited to my concerns, though he tends to assimilate shame to embarrassment (notwithstanding his contrast at 65-6 n27) and is limited by his Kantian framework. For a sensitive account of honour, see Appiah (2011).

Plato builds three details into the story to remind us of this. When Leontius deems the sight of the corpses inappropriate to enjoy, and his desire to look at them disgusting, he has the eyes of others in mind and literally in view: recall, first, that the executioner is present. To be sure, it does not matter whether Leontius notices the executioner or other potential witnesses. As Williams rightly emphasizes, it is a “silly mistake” to think that shame depends on fear of being seen by an actual witness ((1993): 81). In most and more complex cases of shame, the relevant witness may be imagined. Typically, this involves imagining how one would seem to someone one respects, for just the reason brought out earlier that one shares or aspires to share her standard of shameful or beautiful and outstanding conduct; but it is also possible to feel shame at the thought of being seen by another whom one does not respect or whose evaluation one would not endorse. The complexity of shame is borne out further by the fact that the imagined other need not be an actual member of one’s community. She could be a more abstracted ethical reference point or role model (82-4), figured perhaps (to take some examples from the *Republic*) as a mythic hero or god, gentlemanly *kalos kagathos*, philosophical-ruler or, like the executioner, the instrument of Law. What is essential to shame according to Williams, and what is instructive for our interpretation of Leontius, is that the other in shame must be genuinely other, and that means somebody who is “not just a screen for one’s own ethical ideas but is the locus of some genuine social expectations” (98). If this is right, we can better understand why, second, Leontius must cry out *publicly*. Leontius is humiliating himself in a last-ditch attempt to save face.⁷⁹ His ironic

⁷⁹ Cf. Burnyeat (2006): 11, though it is not necessary to suppose that Leontius was seen pushing his eyes wide. What is necessary is the association, perhaps in Leontius’ own mind, between wide eyes and shamelessness: Cf. Xen. *Mem.* 2.1.22 and later, Galeottus Martius’ 1490 *De homine* a.iii: “if the white of the eye is widely extended and visible all round, this shows shamelessness (*impudentiam*)” (cited in Baxandall (1988): 56).

use of *kalon* is meant to show that he still possesses a sense of shame; he is declaring, in effect, 'Better to be weak-willed than shameless!' The element of publicity assumes greater significance when we note, finally, that the entire episode is carefully framed by the eyes and ears of others. Plato stresses at the start that Socrates heard the story from somewhere, at the end that Glaucon had heard it too. Whether Leontius himself, the executioner, or someone else spread the tale, this framing device trains *our* gazes, through a kind of *mise en abyme*, onto the way self-images are informed by and presented to the evaluations of others.⁸⁰

This insight brings home the full meaning of beauty in the mechanisms of shame. It accounts, for example, for the privileged relationship between beauty and *sophrosynē*, modesty, self-control, or temperance. The relationship has less to do with the fact that this virtue is the definitive virtue of women than the wider idea that showing reservation or shame before others makes one seem more beautiful in their eyes. These complex dynamics of vision are played out memorably at *Charmides* 158c. After the dialogue arrives at its theme of *sophrosynē* by way of the astounding beauty of its title character (154c-155d), Socrates narrates that Charmides looked more beautiful than ever when he blushes at the question of whether he is temperate. So too does this rich concept of beauty, at the heart of the structure of shame, account for the way in which honour motivates. Thus Ajax could imagine his shame at being seen by his father without glory – naked, in his phrase (*gymnos*) – and proclaim: “the noble man must either live *kalōs* or die *kalōs*”, or as

⁸⁰ Consider the story of Aristides ‘the Just’ at Plut. *Life of Aristides* VII. 5-6: Aristides writes his own name on an *ostrax* at the request of an illiterate voter who does not recognize him. How did this story of virtuous behaviour become known if not for Aristides telling it? I thank Nickolas Pappas for discussion of this episode.

we might now translate: “live beautifully or die beautifully” (ἀλλ’ ἢ καλῶς ζῆν ἢ καλῶς τεθνηκέναι τὸν εὐγενῆ χροί, Soph. *Aj.* 479-80).

I have traced two prevalent but, I believe, mistaken lines of thought connecting shame, the *kalon*, and appearance to a common source in order to suggest that an anachronistic conception of virtue obstructs our access to the connections that Plato adopts between beauty, shame, and honour and to outline a contrasting conception which may better illuminate them. The idea animating these connections, I said, is that virtue is beautiful – where this means that virtue is a *public* affair, an aesthetic achievement properly for all to see. If virtue is a public affair, one *should* be concerned to some degree with the regard of others, rather than unconcerned or positively *not* concerned with it, as Kierkegaard and a modern private conception of virtue encourage. The concept of the *kalon*, and in turn shame and honour, acquires such ethical importance in this scheme because it answers to a conviction that a fully human life is lived in concert with and before the eyes of others.⁸¹ We saw Demosthenes articulate this conviction when, to great rhetorical effect, he proclaims how the beauty of Athenian democracy and villainy of Philip appeared “before the sight of all men” (ὕπὸ πάντων). Granted, Demosthenes is attempting to mobilize the sort of social identities inherent to spirit by pointing out how ‘obvious’ is Athenian excellence. But he is not simply grandstanding when he refers to ‘the sight of all men.’ He is

⁸¹ Arendt (1958): esp. chs. 4-7, 24-8 captures this point, though with some idealization, in the notion of a space of appearance, rightly cited in this connection by Ford (2010). The ideological contours of the Athenian public/private distinction are worth bearing in mind. Cohen (1994): 72 has this to say: “Athenians identified the private, in the first instance, with the physical boundaries of the home, the threshold and door embodying the separation of two spheres. They thought of public space in terms of places where *men* gathered... private space in this narrow sense is largely female space, enclosed, hidden, guarded, dark. Public space, on the other hand, is associated with men and with the public activities through which men pursue reputation and honour.”

expressing a common idea that the *kalon* in human action properly appears before an audience. If the *kalon* is such as to be praised, it must first be *seen*. Notice the language with which Socrates, speaking as Aspasia, praises the war dead in his critical rendition on Pericles' own funeral oration (*epitaphios logos*):

From this *polis* of ours, the fathers of these men – *our* fathers – and the men themselves, brought up in complete freedom and nobly born, displayed before all men many beautiful deeds both individual and public.

(*Menex.* 239ab)

ὅθεν δὴ ἐν πάσῃ ἐλευθερίᾳ τεθραμμένοι οἱ τῶνδ' γε πατέρες καὶ οἱ ἡμέτεροι καὶ αὐτοὶ οὗτοι, καὶ καλῶς φύντες, πολλὰ δὴ καὶ καλὰ ἔργα ἀπεφώνησαν εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους καὶ ἰδίᾳ καὶ δημοσίᾳ...

Lysias describes virtue in similar terms in his funeral oration: “they displayed their shining virtue to all men” (πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις φανεράν τὴν αὐτῶν ἀρετὴν ἐπεδείξαντο, *Lys.* 2.67). Here the shining or manifest quality of virtue, marked by the term φανεράν, plays the role of the *kalon*, radiating virtue far and wide for all to behold. The phenomenological language is in fact doubled up: their virtue was *displayed* (ἐπεδείξαντο), as one performs a rhetorical display, an *epideixis*. This added emphasis underscores that what is being described, as always with the *kalon*, is not some observer-independent quality of an object but presupposes an audience. These descriptions alight on the aesthetic *experience* of observers in which virtue comes to *presence*. The way Plato has Phaedrus express the idea clarifies both the power and pleasure of this experience and its normal association with honour. When Alcestis died in place of her husband Admetus, Phaedrus tells us:

her deed was judged so beautifully done not only by mortals but even by the gods that, although the gods have given the prize of sending the soul back up from Hades to but a select few of the many who do very beautiful things, they sent *her* soul because they were delighted by her deed.

(*Symp.* 179cd)

τὸ ἔργον οὕτω καλὸν ἔδοξεν ἐργάσασθαι οὐ μόνον ἀνθρώποις ἀλλὰ καὶ θεοῖς, ὥστε πολλῶν πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ ἐργασαμένων εὐαριθμήτοις δὴ τισιν ἔδοσαν τοῦτο γέρας οἱ

θεοί ἐξ Αἰδου ἀνεῖναι πάλιν τὴν ψυχὴν, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐκείνης ἀνεῖσαν ἀγασθέντες τῷ ἔργῳ...

The idea underlying these descriptions is that virtue, insofar as it is beautiful, properly commands widespread recognition, admiration, and delight. The abundant aesthetic vocabulary suggests that virtue is in some sense incomplete if there are few or no eyes to see it, as an incredible between-the-legs winner deep in the fifth-set of a tennis match might be. Put otherwise: the *kalon* reaches fruition when excellence meets with an admiring audience. This explains the need to cultivate a community of agents and spectators united by spirited bonds of shame and honour. These bonds create the social space in which beautiful deeds must make their appearance.

If virtue is considered in these terms, there will not be much distance between the idea that virtue is such as to be seen and the idea, altogether less savory to the moralist, that a virtuous person should care whether her virtue is seen.⁸² We cannot expect to find a gap between these two ideas because to act for the sake of the *kalon* – again, at least as far as spirit is involved – is to act with a view to *appearing* and earning admiration as beautiful in terms of shared norms of beauty. To pursue virtue as *kalon* is to be implicitly directed to others. Summing up, we might say that the formal relation of spirit to the *kalon* marks the significant fact that others are implicated in a conception of oneself.

There is a great irony in advancing the insights of Williams toward this interpretation of Plato. Williams maintains that, in having Glaucon imagine a perfectly just man entirely

⁸² Frank Chapman Sharp hit upon, if exaggerated and idealized, much the same point when he lamented in noting aesthetic dimensions of Aristotle's ethics that "the ability to gaze upon our own superior moral excellencies with all the calm selfcomplacency with which a Beau Brummel might contemplate the beauties of his attire in the glass, this is gone, and we instinctively shrink back at the very idea of making an attempt in this direction" ((1893): 99).

misunderstood by his society, Plato makes a sharp break with epic and tragedy and anticipates Kant in advocating a “featureless moral self” to whose ethical life “contingent features of the agent, such as a character” are irrelevant ((1993): 160). Our discussion of spirit shows that this criticism cannot be maintained. It shows, more specifically, that Williams is wrong to attribute to Plato the idea, which he takes Glaucon to intimate, that reason can simply by itself latch onto the good and pursue it steadily. But Williams raises his criticism of Plato in the course of considering whether, once we see that shame embraces and better explains aspects of guilt, the charge of heteronomy might not be directed at the idealized other in shame to the extent that it remains a “locus of genuine social expectations” (98-100). And this raises a difficult question to what extent Plato thinks the other in the shame, or in the pursuit of beautiful deeds, should become so abstracted and thinned out as to lose its tether to any segment of social reality.⁸³ This question is more pressing and more interesting than the question of *whether* someone should be moved by shame, honour, or other forms of spirited motivation, for the simple reason that Plato assumes that she *will* be so moved if her soul is embodied and she participates in social forms of life, whether political or philosophical or both. The question becomes what these motivations should look like, how they might be transformed if they have been enlarged beyond or displaced from

⁸³ Wilberding (2009) argues, too, that shame would have to be so untethered because the esteemed ‘other’ for Plato should be only one’s *own reason*. There is some trouble with the internal economy of his argument. Wilberding wants spirit to be both “essentially social... wholly dependent on the views of others” and yet treat the soul as a “self-sufficient arena for the achievement of esteem” (366 with n67). This is not quite inconsistent but requires grafting social relations onto the psychological relations of a self-sufficient individual. But this is to assume, entirely unlike Williams, that the other in shame need not be genuinely other or irreducibly social. Wilberding seems led to this result because he assumes without argument that Plato *devalues* the social nature of spirit as heteronomous (353, citing Dodds approvingly at n7).

local convention or, as a familiar picture of the Platonic philosopher suggests, directed toward the divine.

This question is not easily answered. But I would like to suggest a direction for an answer that runs contrary to the direction in which that familiar image of the Platonic philosopher is likely to lead us. One shape the above question takes, the shape it took for Williams, is to what extent Plato preserves the agonistic ethics of archaic Greeks which envisions virtue as a prize in a necessarily social competition. My suggestion is that had Williams attended to spirit with greater sensitivity, he would not have found Plato quite so inimical to this tradition. I argued earlier that the competitive impulse of spirit is necessary for the pursuit of virtue precisely because Plato preserves the Homeric assumption that virtue is such as to be seen to be outstanding by others. From this angle, the thought-experiment of Glaucon will not represent the charge of social heteronomy, as Williams maintains, but an overzealous mistake. Plato, I believe, thinks Glaucon is *wrong* to present virtuous motivation as he does. Its structure is rather more complex. Notice that Socrates himself believes that justice is valuable *both* for its own sake *and* for the sake of its benefits, notably a reputation for justice, and that he calls this class of goods finest, *kallista* (*Rep.* 358ab). His quip that Glaucon is “polishing up” his just and unjust men “just like two statues awarded in a trial” (ὥσπερ ἀνδριάντα εἰς τὴν κρίσιν ἐκκαθαίρεις, 361d) should then suggest that Glaucon is removing some of the burrs and complex colouring of human psychology by ignoring, among other things, a proper concern for the recognition of others.⁸⁴ At the same

⁸⁴ Notice that how Glaucon prepares his case presupposes that political office and ambition would be *regarded* as disgraceful (*Rep.* 347bc). Justice is classed among toilsome goods done for the sake of money (ἐπιπόνου εἶδους, ὁ μισθῶν, 358a), a classification that betrays Glaucon’s aristocratic temperament. Despite his words, Glaucon *presupposes* the desire for recognition by placing himself *above* the need to compete for recognition in so lowly an arena. On this point, see Ferrari (2003): 22. Note also how the

time, Socrates signals that one should not omit this. His simile of statues sounds the theme of competition that he will sustain throughout the dialogue, particularly by presenting the life of justice and indeed the life of philosophy in agonistic terms and imagery.⁸⁵ This shows Plato firmly entrenched in a tradition in which one competes for virtue, as opposed to excepting even the philosophic life from the agonism which many have rightly found pervasive in classical Athens, some no doubt too simplistically.⁸⁶ From within this tradition, of course, Plato rejects or transforms dominant models of self-presentation and the conceptions of beauty that come along with them: aristocratic fashion, riches and power, and most of all, as we will see, the Homeric bid for glory (κλέος).⁸⁷ But we should appreciate that these are themselves agonistic moves within a shared framework that treats the beauty of virtue as a testament to the public character of ethical life and the social nature of human beings. What Glaucon's image of the perfectly just man might then reflect is neither, as Williams supposes, a proto-Kantian charge of heteronomy nor, as Glaucon supposes, that justice can be decoupled from its benefits, virtue from its space of

sculpting metaphor returns later. Glaucon's praise that Socrates has fashioned "wholly beautiful" male rulers "as if he were a sculptor" (παγκάλους... ὥσπερ ἀνδριαντοποιὸς ἀπείργασαι, *Rep.* 540c) again leaves something out, the female rulers, as Socrates quickly points out.

⁸⁵ Agonistic imagery: Patterson (1997), noting esp. *Rep.* 403e, 583b; contest of pleasures at 580a-586e patterned on Olympic wrestling. Rewards 'reintroduced' at 608bc for this great *agōn* (ὁ ἀγών... μέγας) must be *greater* than those *already* mentioned. And so they are: immortality and universal acclaim (612b-614a, 621cd).

⁸⁶ A *locus classicus* is Nietzsche's "Homer's Contest" (1872) rpt. in Nietzsche (2007). See Whitehead (1983) on competitive display, Konstan (2006) on social emotions in this context.

⁸⁷ Cf. *Phd.* 64d: ἱματίων διαφερόντων... καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους καλλωπισμοὺς τοὺς περὶ τὸ σῶμα, in light of which διαφερόντως τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων at 65a may mean that the philosopher distinguishes himself not simply *from* but *above* others by separating soul from body. This reading would suggest that the philosopher 'wears' on the soul a *superior* kind of adornment (καλλωπισμός) than those at 64d who try to distinguish themselves by adorning their bodies with beautiful cloaks, shoes, etc.

appearance, or being from seeming. For on careful reflection these distinctions, as Glaucon applies them, cannot have sense. The case that Glaucon sets out might instead mark well the limiting case of someone who, confident in her virtue, imagines her beautiful character to be seen only by herself and the gods. Or perhaps, as I find more likely, it marks the limiting case of someone so dispossessed of her social world that she can no longer consider her virtue in terms of a concept of beauty at all. What I have been encouraging us to acknowledge is that these cases mark not the aspiration but the despair, the failure, of education for Plato.

The model of spirited motivation that has emerged may be compared to a crystal prism refracting and reemitting light: one receives appearances of beauty and, wanting to be admired on their basis, strives to be and to appear beautiful before the eyes of others. I have emphasized the terms of appearance partly to elucidate the problem to which this social psychology gives rise and to which the prescribed education is specifically addressed. We saw that the conservative nature of spirit reinforces whatever foundational sense of beauty and ugliness one acquires through cultural immersion. This is why it was vital to ensure that children love what *seems and is in fact* beautiful, not what *seems but is not* beautiful. We may now add that one acquires this sense partly on the basis of beautiful appearances that *other* members of one's community make, or try to make, in aspiring themselves to virtuous deeds and to earn admiration for them. These actions will shine more brightly and become the focus of those transactions of shame and honour which shape the kind of person one aspires to become. Now, this is all to the good and is exactly the point of education, *if but only if* a culture is organized around genuine beauty. Yet if a prevalent conception of beauty, the currency of shame and honour, is spurious – not genuine beauty but fool's gold, or fool's good – then the social dynamics of spirit threaten to entrench that

conception further as the measure of a flourishing life. This threat is especially grave if, as I have argued, virtue is a public affair in the sense that its appearance (veridical or not) demands an audience and its pursuit presupposes a mode of self-presentation before the eyes of others. Graver still if a cultural paragon of beauty is someone so dominated by spirited desire as to be insensitive and inimical to the rule of reason, rational criticism, and their order of beauty. If I have tried to illuminate why we need a concept as aesthetically and ethically rich as beauty to capture the dynamics of shame and honour, and vision and visibility, at the very basis of education for Plato, I have also tried to illuminate why we also need one as complex and ambivalent. Plato is confronting a cultural problem that arises when everyone is trying to look their best, and to look the best, but cannot see real beauty for what it is. The problem is named Achilles.

Glory, Grief, and the Problem of Achilles

Could you persuade us, if we refused to listen?
τὸ ἦν πείσωμεν ὑμᾶς ὥς χρηὴ ἡμᾶς ἀφείναι;
Plato, *Republic* 327c

This chapter begins from a simple question:

Why does Socrates use *Odysseus* as his example of spirit at *Rep.* 441bc? The choice is surprising. The allusion shows Plato clearly appropriating a specifically Homeric tradition of thinking about spirited motivation though innovating on this tradition to construct his own philosophical psychology. The Homeric poet conceives of spirit (*thumos*) similarly as a violent psychological force from which spring anger, fear, respectful shame, righteous indignation, courage, and related motivations structured by practices of shame and honour.¹ To be sure, Platonic spirit is an element of the soul whereas spirit and equivalent terms in Homer such as καρδίη, κῆρ, ἦτορ, φρένες are rather organs whose psychic fluctuations are modeled on and ultimately based in the physical fluctuations of a gaseous substance, a kind of breath.² But this ontological difference does not amount to much; when, as we saw, Socrates describes spirit as physically melting (*Rep.* 411b), dyed (429d) or boiling (440c), he places his concept within this

¹ See esp. *Il.* 1. 196, 209; 5. 243; 9. 386-87, 398; 10. 531; 14. 315; 19. 287; 23. 595; 24. 748, 762; *Od.* 6. 20-3; 18. 212. See summarily Renault (2014): 26-46. The excellent study of Hobbs (2000) could present the threat of Achilles with fuller force were she to relate Homeric and Platonic spirit more closely than she does (8, 206). I have benefited much from her most original account; what follows attempts to complement and develop her central insight, if offering some critical amendments.

² *Il.* 4. 522-24, 13. 653-55, 16. 468-69, 20. 403, 21. 416-17.

heritage. Nor should this ontological difference obscure a more basic similarity. Both conceptions of spirit designate an intense affective form of thinking, or a thoughtful sort of intense affect, which if not trained and tamed will, like a lion or some other wild creature, thwart one's better judgment.³

Yet this appropriation and these similarities are precisely what makes the choice of Odysseus odd. For the paragon of spirit in Homer is obviously the lionhearted Achilles (θυμολέοντα, *Il.* 7. 228). What is more, the first expression of the wrath (μῆνις) of Achilles recounted in the *Iliad* is almost identical to the self-restraint of Odysseus that Socrates twice commends, explicitly at *Rep.* 390a and implicitly at 441bc. After Agamemnon threatens in front of the Achaean army to take his ransom, Briseis, in recompense for returning Chryseis, Achilles is indignant, not because he cherishes Briseis – he happily surrenders her moments later (1. 337-38) – but because he feels that Agamemnon “did not honour the best of the Achaeans” (244, 412). Achilles “ponders in his mind and spirit” (ὥρμαινε κατὰ φρένα καὶ κατὰ θυμόν) whether to kill Agamemnon or whether to “check the bitter bile and restrain his anger” (χόλον παύσειεν ἐρητύσειέ τε θυμόν, 192-93). But, tellingly like Odysseus, Achilles is persuaded by Athena that it is better not to act on his indignation, though his spirit remains angry: καὶ μάλα περ θυμῷ κεχολωμένον: ὥς γὰρ ἄμεινον (217). The intervention of Athena notwithstanding, or standing allegorically for the normative rule of reason, the psychology of this episode is so structurally similar to the formal division of the soul at *Republic* 4 that ancient commentators commonly suggested that this passage was its basis.⁴ So why Odysseus and not Achilles?

³ Wild creature: *Il.* 1. 92; 9. 254-56, 496, 635-36; 18. 113; *Od.* 5. 222; 11. 562.

This chapter shows that Plato reconceives the Homeric model of spirit to subvert the heroic ideal of beauty and, more fundamentally, thoroughly ‘tragic’ worldview with which it is interlocked. The figure of Achilles, in his view, is the prime embodiment of these problematic standpoints. The first is problematic because it thwarts what he considers a virtuous and flourishing life insofar as it fails to subordinate spirited desires for honour and glory to reason. The second, the tragic worldview, is problematic because it tacitly denies that the world is structured toward human flourishing. These standpoints are made to seem beautiful, and are thus admired, emulated, and engrained in personal habits and cultural practices, by a conception of Achilles as a paragon of beauty. This chapter shows how Plato addresses this problem: he has Socrates strategically disgrace the model of Achilles in the *Republic*. He does so, moreover, in the course of laying out the very social psychology which threatens to reinforce this model, attempting to redirect admiration toward an alternative conception of the *kalon*.

This chapter may therefore be seen to develop and thereby to reinforce the central argument of the previous one. It develops this argument by situating the internal connection of the *kalon*, and particularly its aesthetic dimensions, to shame and honour against its historical background and by showing it at work in a wider cultural context. This is to make more substantial what I called the formal connection between the *kalon* and spirited motivation by identifying in the figure of Achilles a paragon of beauty and of spirit which should *not* be emulated, at least not before it is re-described almost beyond recognition, and by identifying some of the cultural sources which contribute to its apparent beauty. This is at the same time to

⁴ Cf. [Heraclitus] *Homeric Problems* 17-20, ps.-Plut. *On Homer* 129, AbT-scholia *ad Il.* 1. 524 and A-scholium *ad Il.* 18. 113b. I owe these references to Hunter (2012): 63.

reinforce that to understand the nature and use of the *kalon* for Plato, we need to expand our perspective wider to the social order which the concept organizes and to direct our perspective 'lower,' so to speak, onto the cultural milieu into which his thinking intervenes. If there is need to undermine the model of Achilles, as my account of spirit and as the treatment of this figure strongly suggest, it goes to show the primary need in the *Republic* to cultivate shame and honour properly by a correct and genuine cultural conception of the *kalon*. The challenge is then to preserve the general structure of attitudes exemplified by Achilles while reconfiguring the disastrous shape and substance that the figure of Achilles lends them in present conditions. To bring this challenge and its solution into view, we need first back up to some currents of thought that make Achilles seem beautiful.

§1 *A Tragic Worldview*

One plausible initial response to the question which I posed above is that, in appropriating a Homeric concept of spirit, Plato seeks effectively to domesticate spirit. Odysseus, not Achilles, because the orientation of Achilles' spirit is misdirected, its intensity too strong. Plato wants to avoid associations with Achilles in articulating the form that spirit *should* take because the form that Achilles' spirit *does* take is rarely as restrained as in his initial confrontation with Agamemnon. We may recall that his spirit moves him, in the first instance, to withdraw from battle to spite Agamemnon, much to the devastation of the Achaean army, and to nurse his indignation and wounded pride and to refuse to be persuaded by the much greater recompense that Agamemnon offers in Book 9 (9. 157-629, esp. 256, 299, 386-87). So obstinate is Achilles that

Hector compares him to an unbreakable stone or oak (22. 126).⁵ This tendency recalls the problem we encountered at *Rep.* 410-11 of a poorly tempered spirit, so hard as to be ungentle or deaf to reason. Achilles is a case in point. Although he possesses some degree of the gentleness for which warriors are lauded (17. 670-71, 19. 300, 24. 770-72), particularly in his love for Patroclus, the fact that even this gentler aspect of his character is likened to a lion grieving its cubs (18. 318-22) suggests that it is rooted in a violent and bestial temperament. Surely enough, his grief modulates into vengeance and whatever gentleness Achilles had becomes all but extinguished as his spirit moves him, in the second instance, to fight with bloodlust and without pity, contrary to the gods and to the devastation of the Trojans. This leads to his own devastation as Achilles becomes something less than human, threatening to eat the corpse of Hector raw (22. 348-48) and, after slaying Hector, dragging the corpse by chariot around the tomb of Patroclus (23. 175).

This spirited character and conduct would not need displacement were it not for the fact that the Iliadic Achilles exemplifies a heroic ideal of *beauty* prevalent in classical Athens. Not least from sources documenting his cult worship, this situation is evident from the epistemic authority accorded to 'Homer' in all subjects from household management to generalship, but most of all, Socrates observes, in the values around which to arrange a life (*Rep.* 599c, 606e). So it is that Socrates must assume throughout *Rep.* 3 that Achilles is and will remain a cultural role model for Greek youth (esp. 390e-391c); and he can similarly imply later in *Rep.* 10 that the excitable or irritable character (τὸ ἀγανακτητικόν) typified by Achilles is one of many tropes of mimetic

⁵ His inability to be persuaded is a common refrain, *e.g.*, *Il.* 16. 29-35, 20. 466, 22. 261-66. The use of Phrygian tuning at *Rep.* 399d to allow for persuasion is likely part of the response, on which see this chapter, §3 below.

poetry that seem beautiful to an ignorant many (602a-604e).⁶ This cultural context provides a measure of why, as Angela Hobbs has shown ((2000): 203-19), Socrates selectively foregrounds the ruthless acts and anguish of Achilles at *Rep.* 2-3 in order to mitigate the threat that one will admire him as beautiful and come to develop a similarly insubordinate and unrestrained character by virtue of the social psychology of beauty examined in the previous chapter.

Yet the crux of the threat that Achilles poses lies deeper, as Hobbs herself notes. And we may begin to see that it must from the following considerations. In the first place, the intemperance and particularly the immovable spirit of Achilles are obviously problematic and are even reproached within the epic by Hector and other heroes, the river god Scamander (*Il.* 21. 214-21), and Apollo. The latter calls the desecration of Hector's corpse neither fitting nor good (οὐ... κάλλιον οὐδέ τ' ἄμεινον, 24. 52). It is thus hardly controversial or newsworthy when Socrates cites precisely this episode at *Rep.* 391b as evidence of what Apollo had already called the unmeasured mind (οὐτ'... φρενες... ἐναίσιμοι, 40) of Achilles. Part of Socrates' point is that Achilles' deranged condition is a consequence of his intense sensitivity to the honour (*timē*) he receives or fails to receive from others.⁷ This criticism cuts close to the core of Homeric ethical, social, and psychological life. If a fundamental principle that organizes human and divine life in Homer is that one should behave and be treated according to the *measure* or *portion* (κατὰ μοῖραν) due to him, *timē* is the currency by which the principle is applied in communal relations. It is at

⁶ The term connotes anger and grief, both emblematic of Achilles and a *debased spirit* aligned with appetites: Rubidge (1993): 261-63.

⁷ Some commentators (*e.g.*, Redfield (1975): 99-105, Schein (1984): 105-6) take Achilles' withdrawal and his statement that rewards are not worth his life (*Il.* 9. 400-9) as a rejection of the heroic system of honour. I follow Gill (1996): 138-48 in thinking that his actions and speech depend on a commitment to that system. The tenor of his speech is that he does not want gifts from *that man*, Agamemnon, who slighted him.

once a psychological concept in that it requires respect from others as well as for the honour of others, and also a material concept in that honour is a quantity that increases or decreases with the estimations of others, often signified by the distribution of ransom or reciprocal and unsolicited exchange of gifts. But even here, in the second place, we might reasonably suspect that the epic narrative itself invites us to question the stability or ethical promise of a life or a community organized centrally around the achievement and distribution of honour. Granted, Plato is not concerned with the details of the epic but with its cultural prestige, pedagogic use, and wider influence in processes of acculturation; and we have seen that he has good reasons to claim that sheer exposure to the character and conduct of Achilles will inculcate a sense of beauty too foundational and too recalcitrant to dissolve simply because one can criticize his conduct. Nevertheless, we would do well to trace the spectre of Achilles to the metaphysical and ethical framework that structures and glorifies his actions and passions. This will enable us to appreciate that the impetus to displace Achilles as a role model arises not from shallow interpretation but from close engagement with a facet of epic and tragic poetry that Plato comprehends all too well.

Plato is anxious about the figure of Achilles, and epic and tragic poetry in general, because it glorifies and is glorified by what Nietzsche in the *Birth of Tragedy* and, more recently, Hobbs, Stephen Halliwell and others have identified as a *tragic* worldview in contest with which Plato pursues his own metaphysical, ethical, and psychological thinking. There is some disagreement as to how best to characterize the view or constellation of views that Plato rejects, let alone what constitutes it as tragic, but we may nevertheless summarize it as follows. What I shall call the tragic worldview is an orientation on which human beings find themselves in a fundamentally unintelligible world in which the fact of suffering and death divests their existence of ethical

significance.⁸ Socrates may cite Homer as the leader of the tragedians (*Rep.* 595b, 598d, 607a) because for him Homeric epic advances the most thorough and threatening version of this orientation. Most threatening, I would suggest, insofar as the portrayal of Achilles embodies and leads one sympathetically to accept the conviction that the way to respond to our mortality is by treating human affairs with a “great seriousness” (μεγάλης σπουδῆς) that they are not in fact due (604bc).⁹ This conviction finds vivid expression in Achilles’ sensitivity to honour and pursuit of glory (κλέος) and in his excessive lamentation over the death of Patroclus and his own approaching death. Most instructive is that Socrates cites Achilles’ lamentation as the basis for his criticism that the poetic tradition instils the attitude that death is a terrible evil to be feared (386c-388d).¹⁰ Socrates wants to defang this attitude not in the first instance because it makes for uncourageous guardians. Nor because it makes one lose calm or fill a life with relatively pointless concerns for the sake of status, though these considerations are closer to the mark. Socrates repudiates this attitude to death rather because it is part of a constellation of attitudes animated

⁸ My formulation and discussion owes to Halliwell (2002): 109: “...fundamentally hostile to human needs and values and irreconcilable with a positive moral significance” and 223-27 on intelligibility in the *Poetics*; cf. Williams (1993): 193-94. Hobbs (2000): 211-19 emphasizes vulnerability, but implausibly roots the tragic in a choice between the *kalon* and *agathon*. This is more specific than the Hegelian notion of incommensurable values stressed by Nussbaum (1986), along with vulnerability, and Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1990). See Schein (1984): 60-2, 71, 82 for still another conceptions of the tragic in the *Iliad*. An excellent genealogy of the concept of ‘the tragic’ in German philosophy and classicism may be found in Billings (2014).

⁹ *Rep.* 605d-606a presents the transmission of this outlook through sympathetic grief. I plan to discuss elsewhere how the criticisms of poetry at *Rep.* 10 revolve around the axis of play and seriousness, a point which Aristotle obviates in characterizing tragedy by the serious (*Poet.* 1448b34, 1449b24); but note the summary judgment that one must not treat poetry “seriously, as a serious matter with a bearing on the truth” (οὐ σπουδαστέον... ὡς ἀληθείας τε ἀπτομένη καὶ σπουδαία, 608ab), referring back to sympathetic grief at 605d: συμπάσχοντες καὶ σπουδάζοντες (though σπουδάζω may there be intransitive, denoting getting upset (LSJ s.v. I.3), with καί epexegetical).

¹⁰ Seven of the twelve quotations in this stretch refer to or implicate Achilles. I return to some of these below.

by a certain view of human life that he takes pains to reject at the outset of his cultural critique (379d, quoting partially *Il.* 22. 527-32). This is the view, which Achilles himself voices, that Zeus allots both good and bad fates to human beings. The official problem with this view is that it falsely implies that gods cause badness and that human beings are not responsible for their wrongdoing. Yet beneath the view and its unhappy consequences lurk, more pressingly, the sense that human existence is subject to divine caprice and thus ultimately *unintelligible*.

This Socrates refuses to accept. What does he reject? We can bring the relevant notion of unintelligibility into sharper relief by noticing that Achilles prefaces his hypothesis about Zeus by remarking that “the gods spun life for unfortunate mortals such that we live in unhappiness” (*Il.* 24. 525-26). Achilles intimates not just that the world is *not* structured as a home for human flourishing, but that it is structured or set up *against* the possibility of living well. His sentiment broaches at once an epistemic and an ethical notion of unintelligibility. The aim of making sense of our lives, and human life in general, as a coherent whole is frustrated because human suffering and death are seen to fracture or to defy an overall pattern and point to human life. Human existence seems irredeemably meaningless from this perspective, as do its struggles and sufferings, a sense compounded all the more if happiness and wretchedness seem to be allotted arbitrarily and without regard to justice.¹¹ Hence, notably, the Iliadic image of Apollo destroying the laboriously built Achaean wall like a child playfully building and destroying sand castles (15. 363-64), a microcosm of the sheer arbitrariness of the human condition. Amid this stream of “causes without effects, effects without causes, the whole texture so checkered (*dazu das Ganze so*

¹¹ Achilles’ famous claim that death befalls warrior and do-nothing alike (*Il.* 9. 320) may express the sense that justice and happiness are uncorrelated, particularly if his claim is colored by anger at the *injustice* of Agamemnon not repaying his efforts. The *Republic*, of course, aims to correlate the two.

bunt und mannichfaltig),” we may begin to feel the force of the wisdom of the satyr Silenus or Theognis, that it is best for human beings never to have been born at all.¹²

Within this evaluative landscape, glory or renown, *kleos*, may be seen as suitable recompense for a seemingly ungrounded life and a necessary means of preservation in the face of death. It is the reward for human excellence, which is to say, heroic excellence, for excelling and dying valorously in battle. It is a matter of being spoken or sung about. Through beautiful poetry, the bard immortalizes the hero and his beautiful deeds for generation after generation to come (*Il.* 9. 189; *Od.* 8. 73). This means that the *Iliad* is the glory of Achilles at the same time that it reports his pursuit of glory. The poet memorably calls attention to both aspects of this dual point when he shows Achilles playing a beautifully wrought cithara, taking pleasure as he sings to himself of the glories of men (κλέα ἀνδρῶν, *Il.* 9. 186-89), meta-poetically *performing* what he cares most for in a song that confirms he has attained it. It is axiomatic that heroes aim for glory (9. 413, 11. 227, 12. 26-28, 22. 304-5). Not to do so is a source of great shame, Hector states as he leaves his wife and child to go to his almost certain death (6. 440-46). Yet Achilles pursues glory in the extreme, I would suggest, just as he laments his mortal condition in the extreme, because he epitomizes an acceptance of the tragic worldview. His pursuit of glory and fear of death are two sides of the same spirited coin minted from a desire to recoup meaning for one’s life in a fragile world.

¹² Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy* §14, with Golfing’s (1956 / 1871) translation of *bunt und mannichfaltig*. ‘Multicolored and diverse’ is more literal and picks up Nietzsche’s faint echo of Plato’s use of *poikilos* at *Rep.* 604e-605a (back-reference to the texture of poetry, 602ab), but is less evocative of the point. For Silenus, see *Birth of Tragedy*, §3 with *Soph. Oed. Col.* II.1225-29 and *cf.* *Theogn.* 425-28.

According to Socrates, this sort of character is the product of a truncated ethical and metaphysical horizon. The architectonic role of glory is potentially, from his vantage point, the fullest expression of the tragic worldview because it locates the source of all value within the sphere of human activity. When he rebukes the great seriousness with which an Achilles, ardently striving for glory, orients himself towards human affairs, Socrates suggests not only that such a picture motivates one to value social recognition and other transient goods so disproportionately and so spiritedly that one becomes wretched. Most fundamentally, he suggests, one misconstrues what a value *is* if one supposes that values could be anthropocentric in this way. Whether we follow Socrates in supposing by contrast that it is necessary and salutary to hypothesize an intelligible, divine, and rational order to which human beings should and can in principle assimilate themselves, on this choice hangs nothing less than the tortured question of what it means to live a human life.

Before examining how Socrates attempts to weaken the hold of the tragic worldview by shaming the figure of Achilles, I should like to make salient how the concept of beauty was invoked to support this worldview and the shape of spirited motivation it commends. I shall focus on segments of an admittedly much larger background that, particularly when channelled into funeral oration, informs how Plato reconfigures the connections among beauty, shame, and honour at the heart of ethical development.

§2 *The Heroic Ideal*

Begin at the beginning. “Sing, goddess, of the wrath of Peleus’ son Achilles and its devastation...”

(μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος | οὐλομένην, *Il.* 1. 1-2). Already the opening verse closely

aligns beauty, the province of the Muse, and the devastating spirit of Achilles. It also suggests the particular capacity of the epic to communicate, though also to transmute through beautiful song, seemingly unintelligible structure of human living. The aestheticization of Achilles and his martial excellence will be sustained through over one hundred uses of the adjective *kalos* to describe most frequently male and female bodies and body parts, various artifacts but especially armour, clothing, and architecture, streams of water and trees, and the actions of heroes and gods.¹³ A lexical survey suggests that the most basic and most extensive sense of the adjective is *beautiful*, expressing praise and pleasure, often erotic, usually at the radiant *look* of something, though sometimes at the aural experience of divine or divinely inspired song. One paramount feature of beauty in Homer, reflected with particular vividness when it elicits awestruck wonder, is that it marks a divine or godlike condition and connotes the power and fullness of being that this condition implies. Accordingly, beauty – most transparently denoted by the noun *kállos* – is a prized possession even for the gods, it seems, who snatch up Ganymede “because of his beauty so he might dwell among the immortals” (κάλλεος εἵνεκα οἷο, ἵν’ ἀθανάτοισι μετείη, 20. 235; cf. *Od.* 15. 251).

These are two of sixteen instances of the noun *kallos* in Homer, twice applied to material objects and fourteen times to refer to the beauty of persons, male and female in equal number.¹⁴ In equal number, but not equally. The judgment of Paris reflects the fact that while beauty is so highly sought so as to set sail a thousand ships, the noun tends to designate – by males, to males

¹³ See Yagamata (1994): 225-27 nn2-5 for full citations.

¹⁴ A silver mixing bowl (*Il.* 23. 742) and cosmetic ambrosia (*Od.* 18. 192-93); males: *Il.* 3. 392, 6. 156, 20. 235; *Od.* 6. 237, 15. 251, 18. 219, 23. 156; and females: *Il.* 9. 130, 272, 389, 13. 432, 23. 742; *Od.* 6. 18, 8. 457, 11. 282.

– the definitive virtue and threatening allure of females. Applied to males it thus threatens connotations of femininity that sit in tense relation to the masculine characteristics that the beauty of male warriors is thought to indicate. Perhaps for this reason, the noun is never applied to the two figures who feud over the title of ‘best of the Achaeans,’ Agamemnon or Achilles, though the latter, crucially, is *kallistos*, most beautiful, of all men at Troy (*Il.* 2. 673-74).¹⁵

The Homeric poet registers and negotiates this tension by contrasting the beauty of Achilles with that of Paris. The beauty of Achilles announces his supreme value in the fundamental dimensions of heroic life. It relates to the strength, size, and martial valour of the most ferocious warrior (*Il.* 21. 108). The beauty of Paris emasculates him as a coward for abstaining from battle, reaching almost comical height in the juxtaposition of the war with his urge for sex and his elaborate garments, perfumes, and home (3. 340-454, 6. 313-24). Thus when Hector shames Paris for fleeing from Agamemnon, he imagines that the Achaeans must be laughing at the Trojans “thinking you [Paris] are best among us, only because you are beautiful in form, but there is no strength in your heart, nor courage” (ἀριστῆα πρόμον ἔμμεναι, οὐνεκα καλὸν | εἶδος ἔπ, ἄλλ’ οὐκ ἔστι βίη φρεσὶν οὐδέ τις ἀλκή, 3. 43-5). Paris violates the assumption, which Achilles legitimates, that male physical beauty manifests courage, strength, and other traits appropriate to the status of a *good* man, an *agathos*. The term *agathos* in Homer, when applied to people, primarily designates a warrior chieftain, well-born and most highly

¹⁵ Though *Il.* 6. 156 collocates *kallos* with desirable manhood (ἡνορέην ἐρατεινήν). Ganymede is *kallistos* (*Il.* 20. 233) but apart from reasons of formulaic composition, there may be no contradiction if the superlative marks simply a high or incomparable value more so than a uniquely highest value. It is unlikely that Achilles is *kallista* in virtue of his youth to the exclusion of “his bravery or fortitude” (so, Konstan (2014): 83) because youth is conceptually connected to martial and masculine excellence and a beautiful death, on which see below. For Achilles’ title ‘best of the Achaeans’: *Il.* 2. 239, 769; 4. 512-13; 5. 788-91; 7. 114; 11. 787; 16. 709; 18. 106; 22.158 with Nagy (1979): ch. 2.

regarded by his clan. Paris flouts the expectation that someone who has standing as an *agathos*, as he does, should look beautiful not just in his figure but also in his deeds.

If Paris is one foil for the exemplary beauty of Achilles, another is the ugly and much maligned Thersites (*Il.* 2. 211-77).¹⁶ Ugliest (αἷσχιστος) of all men at Troy, Thersites is richly described as bowlegged, lame in one foot, hunched with stooped shoulders, back with a pointy head topped with little hair, a marked departure from the flowing locks that characterize the Achaeans (2. 216-19). Yet his physical deformity is made to match the ugliness of speech by which we are introduced to this wretched figure. And what ultimately makes for his “measureless speech” (ἀμετροεπής, 212) and “many disorderly words” (ἔπεα ... ἄκοσμά τε πολλά, 213), the poet suggests, is the fact that he regularly chides his superiors, particularly Achilles and Odysseus, although he lacks the appropriate standing to do so. It is characteristic of Thersites “to quarrel in vain and unduly with kings with whatever words he thinks is ridiculous to the Argives” (μάψ, ἀτὰρ οὐ κατὰ κόσμον, ἐριζέμεναι βασιλεῦσιν | ἀλλ’ ὅ τι οἱ εἴσαιτο γελοῖον Ἀργείοισιν (214-15)).¹⁷ This description is obviously evaluative. It is the sort of evaluation that Odysseus himself gives after Thersites criticizes Agamemnon for not valuing the effort of his troops and for dishonouring Achilles by taking Briseis, in effect usurping more than his due. Thersites echoes the criticisms Achilles made moments before. There is little ridiculous in the content and intent of his speech, except for the fact that Achilles could make that criticism while Thersites cannot, as Odysseus makes clear in his retort. Coming to the side of Agamemnon, he

¹⁶ Blondell (2014): 24 helpfully remarks that Thersites and Achilles “two sides of the same coin” of praise and blame.

¹⁷ Note too that whereas Thersites speaks, the Achaeans “remain orderly” or “restrained” (ἐρήτυθεν, 211).

does not address the legitimacy of these criticisms but rejects the legitimacy of Thersites to raise them. “Thersites, you babblers,” he retorts, “clear speaker though you may be, stop and do not strive singly against kings” (Θερσίτ᾽, ἀκριτόμυθε, λιγύς περ ἐὼν ἀγορητής | ἴσχεο, μηδ᾽ ἔθελ᾽ οἷος ἐριζέμεναι βασιλεῦσιν, 246-7). The initially puzzling contrast of clear speech (λιγύς ... ἀγορητής) and confused nonsense (ἀκριτόμυθε) suggests what the following line confirms, that the disorder imputed to Thersites’ speech has little, if anything, to do with its aural quality or composition and rather much to do with the fact that it affronts the principle that one must behave and be treated according to his due measure.¹⁸

As the presentation of Thersites shows, this principle organizes an ethics and aesthetics according to which the ugliness of excess or deficiency and the beauty of proportion are keenly felt and intensely monitored by shame and honour. These attitudes plausibly have greater force and ethical weight than in classical experience, but they similarly correspond to social norms of which actions are *kalon* as opposed to *aischron* or, in a similarly visual idiom, seemly (ἐπιεικής) as opposed to unseemly (ἀεικής).¹⁹ Thersites so profoundly violates the social order that his behaviour must seem so thoroughly *ugly* and the mark of the ugliest soul, suitable only to the ugliest body. While the poet does give voice to this radical challenge to the archaic ethical framework, and the Achaeans do pity Thersites as they laugh at him being beaten by Odysseus (*Il.* 2. 270), the ugliness and ridiculousness of Thersites reinforces the physiognomy and

¹⁸ Though κекλήγων, cognate with λιγύς, is used to reproach the shrillness of his words at *Il.* 2. 221.

¹⁹ It is not *kalon*, for instance, to challenge a superior (*Il.* 17. 19-21), interrupt at an assembly (19. 70-80), or as Paris later recognizes, desist from battle (6. 326, 13. 116). Adkins’ dichotomy of competitive and cooperative virtues leads to implausible claims that *kalon* in Homer is evaluative only in the neuter case, but never ‘morally’ so ((1960): 31-32, 158-61), has little persuasive effect, and is not the true contrary of *aischron* (43-5).

evaluative scheme on which Achilles and his mode of being are exemplary objects of admiration, emulation, and envy.

At the pinnacle of this scheme, I mentioned, is the concept of glory, *kleos*. This concept is ultimately responsible, on the one hand, for the inseparable connection in Homer between excellence and appearing beautifully before others – which encourages the zeal of Achilles’ spirit – and, on the other hand, for the aura of beauty lent to Achilles and the tragic worldview which conditions his actions and passions. The reflective and self-reflexive moment when he sings to himself of the glories of men serves to intensify the choice Achilles considers moments later of whether to return home to a long but anonymous life or to fight and gain unwithering glory (κλέος ἄφθιτον, *Il.* 9. 413). Of course, we know the outcome and we know that Achilles does, too. In some sense this is no choice at all, less because his decision is fated than because Achilles understands himself as someone whose fate it is to live a short life, someone destined to win glory. Hobbs correctly observes that this self-awareness is placed alongside and lends some pathos to his ambition to ensure that his life will have counted for something, indeed for something great. Slighted by Agamemnon, Achilles cries to his mother that because he is “to be a man with a short life,” Zeus at least should grant him honour, an appeal to rectify the just order of the universe that Achilles feels all too acutely is fractured (1. 352-56). His mother replies in tears with words that reinforce the tragic orientation of the epic: “Why did I raise you, cursed in your birth? Would that your lot be to sit by your ships not weeping, untroubled since indeed your lifetime is to be short, of no length (τοι αἴσα μίνυνθά περ οὐ τι μάλα δήν). Now it has befallen that your life must be brief and bitter beyond all men’s” (1. 414-17).

I mentioned glory as the sole recompense for such a life. This is not to suggest, as Hobbs assumes, that the desire for glory is a *response* to a painful awareness of mortality, still less that spirit “in essence affirms life” in its bid for honour and glory ((2000): 212). Each assumption is problematic, or at the very least questionable insofar as it extricates spirited motivation and attendant concepts from the Homeric evaluative framework which structures them. This procedure leads Hobbs, I would suggest, to misidentify the heart of what for Plato constitutes the tragic worldview and thus the threat of Achilles. Rather than frame her account in terms of a pessimistic notion of unintelligibility, Hobbs claims that the tragic situation Plato aims to repudiate is the need to choose between doing what is *kalon* – pursuing glory – and doing what is *agathon* – what is in all other respects beneficial, returning home and staying alive (188, 212, 217-220).²⁰ Yet it is questionable whether Achilles does or could understand his deliberation about how to go toward his death in these terms. Not only are the relevant ethical concepts, *kalon* and *agathon*, more tightly correlated, as we saw above. More consequentially, the ethical framework in which those concepts are used and to which Achilles is committed requires that the *best* and *most beautiful life* is one in which a hero dies in battle for the sake of glory.

Nowhere is this more vivid than in the motif of a glorious, noble, or beautiful death:

For a young man all is seemly when he is cut down in battle and torn with sharp bronze and lies there dead, and though dead, still all that shows about him is beautiful. When an old man is dead and down, and the dogs mutilate the grey head and grey beard and the parts that are secret, this is the most pitiful sight for wretched mortals.

(Il. 22. 71-6)

²⁰ Even were this the problem, its solution is unlikely to depend on the relation between the Platonic forms of the Beautiful and the Good, as Hobbs proposes ((2000): 220-27), because admiration and emulation are do not depend on such metaphysical commitments. More relevant in this connection is the idea, which Hobbs mentions but does not pursue, that what is ultimately most valuable lies beyond contingent human practices.

... νέω δέ τε πάντ' ἐπέουκεν | ἄρηϊ κταμένω δεδαϊγμένω ὀξείῃ χαλκῷ | κείσθαι· πάντα
δὲ καλὰ θανόντι περ ὅτι φανήη· | ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ πολίον τε κάρη πολίον τε γένειον |
αἰδῶ τ' αἰσχύνωσι κύνες κταμένοιο γέροντος, | τοῦτο δὴ οἴκτιστον πέλεται δειλοῖσι
βροτοῖσιν

This passage exceeds Priam's earlier claim that it is not unseemly (οὐ ἀεικὴς) to die for one's country (15. 496-97). As Jean-Pierre Vernant has argued in his excellent discussion of this remarkable passage, Priam specifies the ideal of heroic life and its *raison d'être*.²¹ Essential to winning glory is that a *young* warrior dies in battle at the acme of his vitality, vigor, and strength, so as to manifest and fully attain his excellence and thereby to secure glory among the living. When he does, "all that shows about him is beautiful": his corpse itself shines with a complete beauty in a spectacular vision that signals the fulfilment of masculine youth and an outstanding life. The visual beauty of the corpse is made to correspond in the epic imagination to the aural beauty of the poetry which preserves and transmits the identity of the hero, his beautiful deeds and death.²² It is for this beautiful appearance literally in the eyes, and then ears, of others that Achilles, above all heroes, lives. Its condition on youth explains why Achilles must live a short life and why his martial prowess, youth, and superlative beauty are all essentially intertwined. It is superfluous, in a way, when we learn of his "beautiful body" as he dies at *Odyssey* 24. 44 because the glory conferred upon him in the *Iliad* entails that his life is pre-inscribed with the

²¹ Vernant (1991): ch. 2. I confess not to find here or in related passages a contrast between the *agathon* as *personally* beneficial and the *kalon* as *impersonal*, let alone impersonal *duty*-based motivation of the Kantian stripe, as do Yagamata (1994): 237 and Riegel (2011): 33, 46, 77.

²² Recall the mimetic relation made explicit by Pindar, cited in Chapter 1, §3: his ode is "a mirror for beautiful deeds" (ἔργοις δὲ καλοῖς ἔσοπτρον, *N.* 7.14), and *cf.* fr. 121: it is fitting that the most beautiful songs (καλλίσταις ἀοιδαῖς) immortalize a beautiful deed which would otherwise die in silence (θνήσκει δὲ σιγαθὲν καλὸν ἔργον).

beauty of a beautiful death.²³ By contrast, an elderly man such as Priam, no longer in the bloom of his youth (ἡβης ἄνθος), knows that he lies beyond the pale of glory. The vivid imagination of his exposed and bloodied genitals and mutilation by dogs may be partly an attempt to garner pity were he unfittingly to die in battle. But above all it serves to reinforce the beauty of a young warrior cut down in his prime. The ideal of a beautiful death condenses the spirited psychology, values, and total tragic orientation for which Achilles stands.

This exhortation towards a beautiful death makes explicit what lies implicit in the sustained botanic imagery by which the arc of heroic life is described and aestheticized throughout the poem. Indeed, as Seth Schein notes, the very term *hērōs* is likely cognate with *hōrē*, ‘season’, and the hero is seasonal in Homer insofar as he blossoms like flowers in spring only to wither away soon ((1984): 69). The etymological connection fastens onto the family of associations just noted between beauty, flowering, flourishing or blossoming, and the intimations of loss, death and decay from which they derive their meaning and poignancy. Not only are generations of human beings compared to those of leaves, one dying as another grows (*Il.* 6. 146-49; *cf.* 2. 468). Time and again a young warrior is compared to a tree whose magnificent height gestures to its fall and decay. Consider how the poet recounts the death of Simoeisios. After his patronymic, Simoeisios is introduced by the epithet meaning stout or blooming, θαλερός (4. 474). Appropriately so, because when Ajax stabs him, he falls to the ground “like a black poplar” whose uppermost branch is “cut down with the shining iron, to bend it into a wheel for a beautifully wrought chariot,” leaving the poplar to harden by the riverbank (485-87) just as the body of

²³ Compare the shining body of Patroclus moments before his death (*Il.* 16. 805), the beautiful corpse of Hector after death (22. 370-71) and after purification (24. 757-58).

Simoeisios (himself born on a river bank) stiffens on the ground. Several other rich descriptions of this sort sound the motif of a beautiful death. Most poignant is perhaps the death of Euphorbos:

He fell thunderously and his armor clattered upon him, and his hair, lovely as the Graces, was drenched with blood, those braided locks bound in gold and silver. Like a sapling of a luxuriant olive tree that a man cultivates in a lonely place where, having drunk plenty of water, it may flourish beautifully; and winds shake it from all sides and it bursts into white blossoms. But then wind, descending upon it suddenly in a great tempest, wrenches it out of its stand and topples it to the ground; such was Euphorbos of the strong ash spear, the son of Panthoös...

(Il. 17. 50-9)

δούπησεν δὲ πεσών, ἀράβησε δὲ τεύχε' ἐπ' αὐτῷ. | αἵματί οἱ δεύοντο κόμαι
Χαρίτεσσιν ὁμοῖαι | πλοχμοί θ', οἱ χρυσῷ τε καὶ ἀργύρῳ ἐσφῆκοντο. | οἶον δὲ
τρέφει ἔρνος ἀνὴρ ἐριθιλὲς ἐλαίης | χώρῳ ἐν οἰοπόλῳ, ὅθ' ἄλις ἀναβέβροχεν ὕδωρ,
| καλὸν τηλεθάον: τὸ δέ τε πνοιαί δονέουσι | παντοίων ἀνέμων, καὶ τε βρῦει ἀνθεῖ
λευκῷ: | ἐλθὼν δ' ἐξαπίνης ἄνεμος σὺν λαίλαπι πολλῇ | βόθρου τ' ἐξέστρεψε καὶ
ἐξετάνυσσ' ἐπὶ γαίῃ: | τοῖον Πάνθου υἱὸν εὐμμελίην Εὐφορβον...

This botanic imagery may work to assuage disgust at the imagination of a bloodied corpse. It may similarly work to transmute suffering of the horrors of war or terrors of life by placing them at some distance, in relation to peacetime activities such as building a chariot, though of course the epic by no means shies away from gruesome details elsewhere. These functions are surely integral to the epic. But I am suggesting that they are complementary to and intimately bound up with the way in which the aestheticization of violence reflects the internal condition on glory of a beautiful death.

I have dwelled on the motif of a beautiful death at some length for two reasons. Firstly, it is the positive correlate to the anxiety central to the tragic worldview that life will have been utterly loathsome and meaningless if one is quickly forgotten after death. From this anxiety springs the disordered structure of Achilles' spirit and, quite plausibly, some of the appeal of his character. In this connection, we should notice one final detail of Priam's exhortation. His leading

contrast between young and old suggests that the shining beauty of a fallen young warrior wards off the pitiful fates of aging and of dying in battle as an elderly man. Whereas the corpse of the latter lies exposed, the beauty of the young hero even in death functions to preserve his body, like a protective shield, from decay or disfiguration which would make it impossible to identify and so memorialize him. This is one meaning of the constant fear throughout the epic, expressed in threats and managed by intense burial rites, that one's corpse will be mutilated by dogs, birds, or other animals.²⁴ Hence, too, the collective outrage as Achilles defiles Hector's corpse and the need for Aphrodite to protect it in a fragrant ambrosiac (*Il.* 23. 186-87). The ugliness of a mutilated corpse to which Priam alludes does not simply elicit disgust or pity, then, but registers a fracture in the ethical codes and ambitions of heroic life that a beautiful death and its botanic imagery sustain.

There is a second and, for our purposes, more significant reason to emphasize the motif of a beautiful death, as a condensation of tendencies in the epic concepts of beauty, spirit, and excellence. It becomes a trope of classical Athenian funeral oration in a way that reinterprets yet perpetuates the figure of Achilles as a model in terms of which Athenians were to conceive of and display their excellence within the burgeoning democratic community. "There was no fundamental difference," Nicole Loraux argues in her voluminous study of the contribution of funeral oration to Athenian democratic ideology, between "edifying Achilles, proposed as a model for Athenian youth, and the exemplary Athenians, the heroes of the historical catalogue" whose image deceased soldiers were made to reflect and to whose ranks they were symbolically

²⁴ See Segal (1971) for extensive discussion and citation of this theme, condensed in Vernant (1991): 67-74.

added ((1986): 145). Beginning sometime early in the fifth century BCE, Athenians gathered each winter to commemorate their war dead, burying whosever bones were retrieved in the public cemetery and electing one speaker to eulogize them in the funeral speech (*epitaphios logos*). This much is clear from Thucydides, whose report (2.34-46) of Pericles' speech in 431/430 BCE is the most famous of the six surviving templates of the genre.²⁵ Loraux makes a compelling case that funeral oration self-consciously attempted to make Athenian citizens identify themselves as collective, autochthonous members of a unified *polis* whose political interests and glory they might then seek to advance. Pericles, for example, memorably instructs those gathered to reflect upon the greatness of Athens and become her lovers (ἐρασταί) so that they too may lay their lives down for her as the "most beautiful contribution they could offer" (κάλλιστον δὲ ἔρᾶνον αὐτῇ προϊέμενοι, 43.1). The fallen soldiers show forth the greatness of Athens and merit emulation because, says Pericles, believing victory the "most glorious of risks" (κινδύνων... κάλλιστον νομίσαντες), they decided (ἐβουλήθησαν) to fight, "and through the fortune of that briefest instant, at the height of glory rather than fear, they departed" (καὶ δι' ἐλαχίστου καιροῦ τύχης ἅμα ἀκμῇ τῆς δόξης μᾶλλον ἢ τοῦ δέους ἀπηλλάγησαν, 42.4).²⁶

²⁵ Evidence of the genre is indirect: Thucydides' report does not pretend to duplicate the speech of Pericles; Gorgias' and Lysias' speeches were clearly not written for public delivery but to show their oratorical skill; Demosthenes' (338/37 BCE) and Hyperides' (322 BCE) come too late to define the genre; and the speech of Aspasia in Plato's *Menexenus*, long thought spurious but now safely attributable, is in *some* way a critical comment on the speech of Pericles. Loraux (1986): 311-27 elaborates the common view that its aim is *solely* parody, but Monoson (1998) and Pappas and Zelcer (2015) variously interpret it as contesting the means and content of Pericles' civic education.

²⁶ Trans. Rusten (1986): 75. See Rusten for careful study of the stylistic and grammatical constructions and textual problems at Thuc. 2.42.4 (for this phrase, see 67-71).

Pericles enlists the pattern of a beautiful death specific to funeral oration, appropriating a set of motifs bound to recall Achilles in the process of educating a distinctively Athenian civic identity. All extant speeches praise and exhort, with some variation, the same pattern of a beautiful death: a soldier (1) makes an active *choice* to fight bravely and thus having died, (2) attains everlasting glory and (3) may posthumously be declared good, *agathos*, or happy, *eudaimōn*, for manifesting virtue in this decisive moment.²⁷ This pattern is clearly informed by and places itself in relation to the epic motif of a beautiful death. Most generally, it sustains a beautiful death as the measure and sign of excellence. This idea is furthered by consistent use of the formula *andres agathoi genomenoi*, ‘having become good men.’ Originating in archaic military poetry, the phrase is common to funerary inscription and other patriotic contexts to honour war dead. What is notable is the use of the verb *gignesthai* to imply that one *becomes* good in death. It introduces a special sense of becoming in contrast to being good. The deceased becomes good in the sense that, although it is not the case that he *was* a *good man* throughout his life – a designation that genealogically belonged to aristocrats – he earns the right to be *called* good by displaying courage in one decisive moment.²⁸

²⁷ Loraux (1986): 98-105, 113-18, with ample citations. Note esp. death or having died as *kalos*: *Menex* 246d; Hyp. 3.27; Dem. 60.1, 26, 27, 37; as seemly (εὐπρεπής): Lys. 2.23 and Thuc. 2.44.1; and emphasis on choice: Dem. 60.37; Gorg. DK B6 p. 285, li. 7; *Menex*. 246d; Lys. 2.24; Thuc. 2.42.4, 43.3 with Rusten (1986): 62, 67.

²⁸ See further Loraux (1986): 99-110, citations at nn 126-27; cf. Rusten (1986): 71-73 and Whitehead (1993): 44-6. Sometimes *einai* (to be) is used in place of *gignesthai* but, as Mann (2000): 105 n46 explains, this shows only that ‘being good’ could apply in ordinary Greek to (i) the strict sense of being an aristocrat and (ii) to acting well on occasion, for which *gignesthai* is used: a non-aristocrat could *become good* in the sense of displaying characteristics of an aristocrat who has them in virtue of his *being*, so to speak. For this sense of *gignesthai* in Plato’s metaphysics, see Mann (2000): 98-105. Loraux is correct to emphasize this specific aristocratic inheritance.

With this, the motif of a beautiful death shifts its focus in two main respects. First, beauty no longer attaches to the corpse of the hero slain in battle, as in Homer or the elegy of the Spartan poet Tyrtaeus styled on Priam's exhortation (fr. 10.20-30).²⁹ Now, more abstractly, the death itself (or the having died) is called beautiful when understood as the outcome of a rational choice to stand firm in battle. The emphasis on decision may put one in mind of Achilles' 'choice' of lives, although here would lie a second difference. The notion of glory is no longer individual but collective. It is the reward for conduct that aims at the preservation of the *polis*, distributed to Athenian war dead as a group to motivate Athenians to do the same as a group. This is to some extent to mitigate the political instability that the pursuit of individual glory threatens, a threat Achilles makes quite salient.³⁰ Yet this strategy essentially sustains glory as the ultimate political and ethical value. Especially given the educational hegemony of epic in Athens, it sustains in turn the conception of beauty on which the psychology and values of Achilles, and a life dominated by spirit more generally, are most attractive. This plausibly sustains, at some level of the cultural imagination, the tragic worldview and certainly the impulse towards a beautiful death.

²⁹ Tyrtaeus fr. 10.20-30 exhorts young hoplites not to cede front rank to elders: "Indeed it is an ugly thing when an older man lies fallen among the front ranks with the young behind him, his head already white and his beard grey, breathing out his valiant spirit in the dust, clutching in his hands his bloodied genitals – this is a shameful sight and brings indignation to behold – his body naked. For the young everything is seemly as long as he has the radiant bloom of lovely youth (νέοισι δὲ πάντ' ἐπέουκεν | ὄφρ' ἐρατῆς ἥβης ἀγλαὸν ἄνθος ἔχηι): men marvel at the sight of him, women feel desire when he is alive and when he has fallen among the front ranks, he is beautiful (καλός)"; and ll. 1-2: "It is beautiful for a good man to die (τεθνάμεναι γὰρ καλόν... ἄνδρ' ἀγαθόν) when he has fallen among the front ranks fighting for his homeland."

³⁰ There is in this already some displacement of the model of Achilles, as Loraux (1978): 812 notes: "comme si Athènes y tenait la place que, dans l'épopée, occupe Achille."

These are the lineaments of one significant strand of the cultural education in beauty that Plato critiques. Its motif of a beautiful death in particular fosters attractions which prioritize honour in a bid to be first and foremost *remembered* for beautiful deeds. This pattern of emphasis is raised and criticized in somewhat concentrated fashion not just in the anti-Periclean oration of the *Menexenus*, but in the way Socrates approaches his own death (*Ap.* 28cd, *Phd.* 117c-118a) and in his location, in the voice of Diotima, of the truest mortal approximation of immortality *not* in “undying glory” (κλέος ... ἀθάνατον, *Symp.* 208c) but in the achievement of wisdom and virtue through an ecstatic vision of the Beautiful itself (212a).³¹ The continuing appeal of a beautiful death is similarly at issue, however obliquely, in a telling exchange at *Hippias Major* 291d-292e. Hippias proposes the conventional view that the most beautiful life is a rich, healthy, and *long* life in which one is well-honoured, provides a beautiful funeral for his parents and receives a beautiful funeral by his own children. Achilles is used as a counter-example: it is not *kalon* for him to have lived long. I mention this passage to note simply, and all too briefly, first that Achilles can function as a counter-example because the shape of his fate remained an exemplar of a beautiful life. Second, though it precludes the *epic* ideal of a beautiful death, the conception of beauty and human flourishing that Hippias expresses still revolves around concerns with honour and how one appears before a community, particularly in death. If this order of spirited motivation is as fundamental to an education in beauty for Plato as I have argued, then he must realign the concepts of beauty and spirit so that one will come to inhabit a sense of shame and honour that

³¹ This person is “immortal, if anyone is” (εἴπερ τῷ ἄλλῳ ἀνθρώπων ἀθάνατῳ). Diotima paraphrases Achilles and discusses glory at *Symp.* 208c-e in dactylic hexameter, speaking as a poet to outdo poets rather than simply cite their authority, as all the other speakers did. Thanks to David Sider for calling my attention to this.

does *not* champion the psychology and values of an Achilles – or, we may now add, a Pericles – but remains open to persuasion and the beauty of reason and virtue. I have cited key moments of this realignment at *Republic* 2-3. It remains to elaborate its strategy.

§3 *Disgracing Achilles*

The dynamic examined in Chapter 2 between aesthetic aspects of the *kalon* and spirited shame and honour explains two notable tendencies of the poetic (and cultural) reforms at *Republic* 2-3. The first is that Achilles comes in for criticism, directly or indirectly, far more than any other figure, as Hobbs has shown. If musical-poetic education principally shapes self-images of spirit and desires for esteem through a cultural conception of beauty, the cast of Achilles' character is especially worrisome because it served at once as an ideal of beauty and the foremost model of spirit. I want now to examine the response to this worry. This is the second tendency: the criticisms proceed by *disgracing* or *shaming* Achilles. The aim of this strategic use of shame is to direct the spirited attachments, not now of the guardians but of Glaucon, Adeimantus, and any likeminded audience, against the tragic worldview and toward paths more congenial to a philosophic life.

My concern lies primarily with the thick evaluative categories by which Socrates specifies what, in contrast to Achilles, genuinely beautiful character consists in and how these categories solicit a framework of spirited attachments and disgusts that, by his own assumptions about early education, his interlocutors have been acculturated into. The use of thick categories depends on the difficulty that Plato (and Socrates) can *persuade* his audience, as opposed to forcing their minds, only if *they* engage in criticism and if *he* works from within their current problematic

mindset. To reject Achilles as a model would be incredulous and could have no traction. Plato can take recourse, however, in shared ethical and aesthetic values and language to cast harsher light on aspects of Achilles that his interlocutors already recognize as worrisome.

We find, therefore, the following cunning strategy. Socrates claims that it is impious and false to state that Achilles was such a money-lover (οὕτω φιλοχρήματον) as to fight only if he received gifts from Agamemnon or to return Hector's corpse to Priam only for a "ransom" (τιμή, *Rep.* 390e); or that he hubristically fought with Apollo and the river god Scamander, dragged Hector's corpse around Patroclus' tomb and slaughtered captives (391ab); and in general that a man of such eminent pedigree was so disordered (ταραχῆς) as to suffer both "stinginess [or slavishness] that becomes money-loving and arrogance towards gods and men" (ἀνελευθερίαν μετὰ φιλοχρηματίας καὶ αὖ ὑπερηφανίαν θεῶν τε καὶ ἀνθρώπων, 391c). Socrates lists several of the most deplorable acts of Achilles. He must explicitly deny that Achilles could have performed them, if his present interlocutors (and the imaginary *polis*) take Achilles as a role model, at least nominally. Yet the rhetorical point of listing these acts, and in such relentless succession, is to insinuate and to help his interlocutors come to see that Achilles is unworthy of admiration and emulation as pre-eminently *kalon*. The concession that these myths are impious or false rings hollow to a knowing ear.

The cunning of this strategy becomes clearer when we notice that all of the criticisms of Achilles at *Rep.* 3 are arranged to cast him as shameful, sometimes distorting the episodes cited. The criticisms converge on the idea that Achilles lacks *self-control*, *modesty* or *moderation* (σωφροσύνη) and that to emulate such conduct is unbecoming of a *free masculine male*. (For rhetorical purposes at least, recall from Chapter 2, Socrates draws on the masculinist and

aristocratic rhetoric of *kalokagathia*; the radical egalitarian allowances of Book 5 are a long way off.) I cited two of the three heads under which his lack of self-control is categorized: greedy money-loving (φιλοχρηματία) and arrogance (ὑπερηφάνια). The latter is not in dispute. Socrates need only mention one line (*Il.* 1. 225 at *Rep.* 390a) of Achilles' lengthy abuse of Agamemnon and his quarrels with gods to show that Achilles cannot remain obedient to his superiors, as courageous soldiers must obey their captain and, psychically, spirit must obey to reason. To heighten the contrast, Socrates quotes two examples from the *Iliad* of inferiors listening in silence to their superiors (389e). The emphasis on silence in this context signifies the need to *listen* so that one may be *persuaded*.

In Chapter 2, §3, I suggested in discussing specifically musical *mimēsis* (*Rep.* 410c-411e) that Socrates' anxiety over a spirit ungentle to rational persuasion adverts to the model of Achilles. This suggestion is borne out further by a parallel passage in which Socrates aligns the lack of normatively human, ethical abilities to listen and to engage in persuasion with the arrogance attributed to Achilles moments earlier. At *Rep.* 399ab, Socrates describes the two melodic tunings required to bring gracefulness to the soul, cultivating the balance of savagery and gentleness needed for a well-functioning spirit and psychic integrity. Their use, too, is organized by the contrast between force and persuasion. The Dorian tuning is used to express and inculcate the sounds and accents of a courageous man who, engaged in violent deeds (βιαίῳ ἐργασίᾳ), is steadfast in confronting misfortune or death. To complement this character type, the Phrygian tuning inculcates the sounds and accents of someone who engages in peacetime activities of persuasion, whether attempting to persuade (πείθοντός) someone through prayer or teaching or yielding to the persuasion of another, "modestly and measuredly and without

arrogance” (μὴ ὑπερηφάνως ἔχοντα, ἀλλὰ σωφρόνως τε καὶ μετρίως, *Rep.* 399b). Having singled Achilles out for his arrogance – the term occurs nowhere else – Socrates implies that Achilles *specifically* is brutish and lacks the measure of reason. Like the notion of order at *Rep.* 410cd, the aesthetic and ethical significance of measure (μέτριος) serves here to deny Achilles the beauty of gracefulness and harmony by which the interlocutors characterize virtue moments later.³²

This parallel passage equally bears out how the language of softness at *Rep.* 410c-411e works to present Achilles as lacking an effective sense of shame which can restrain appetitive desires. For the reference to modesty or self-control at 399b rejuvenates a still earlier criticism that Achilles’ constitution is overly sensitive and *soft* in a way unfit for a *free masculine male* (μαλακώτεροι, *Rep.* 387c). Significantly, this charge is developed strategically and progressively. Progressive stages are necessary to overcome the obvious difficulty that Achilles is assumed a paradigm of bravery and masculinity, and fairly so. So it is that Socrates must first prepare the way for the criticism of effeminacy by associating Achilles with slavishness. At issue from *Rep.* 386a-387c are terrifying descriptions of death and the underworld that instil fear of death. What I should like to emphasize is that the question whether the guardians should fear death is carefully framed in terms of the attitudes appropriate for *free men rather than slaves*. Guardians must not hear such terrifying things, Socrates claims, because in fearing death they would not prefer death over defeat and slavery (386b). This is unsuitable for “boys and men who are supposed to be free” (παισὶ καὶ ἀνδράσιν οὓς δεῖ ἐλευθέρους εἶναι, 387b). The issue thus

³² Cf. μετρώτατα... τελέως καὶ εὐαρμοστότατον μουσικώτατον at the close of our parallel passage at *Rep.* 412a.

framed, it is not incidental that the first passage Socrates invokes presents Achilles in Hades proclaiming to Odysseus, “I would rather be a serf working the fields of another, one without possessions... rather than be lord over all the dead who have perished” (386c quoting *Od.* 11. 489-91, Aesch. fr. 350).³³ This choice of quotation is striking. While it suggests only obliquely the terrors of the underworld, it depicts Achilles in no uncertain terms as willing to be a slave. This depiction sets the stage for Socrates to portray his lack of restraint or self-control in terms of the *effeminate* gratification of *shameful* pleasures.

The next stage of criticism (*Rep.* 387d-388e) concerns behaviour motivated by the above view of death. In part to repudiate this central attitude of the tragic worldview, Socrates characterizes its expression in excessive grief and lamentation as something fit for unrefined women and wicked men (388a). Again, Socrates begins with a citation of Achilles, in both senses of the term. He rebukes Achilles grieving Patroclus by rolling around on the ground, pacing distraught on the shore, and pouring dust over his head.³⁴ He also censures, notably, Thetis lamenting the grief of Achilles over Patroclus and, implicitly, the imminent death of her own son (388a-c), refracting through a sharply angled prism the deeper evaluative and metaphysical strands of thought in the epic examined in the previous section. Socrates intends to weaken the attraction of this entire framework, with its attendant conceptions of spirit and the *kalon*, by construing these episodes as violations of conventional Athenian male prescriptions against outpourings of grief. Socrates reminds Glaucon, and Glaucon agrees, that “we say” (φάμεν,

³³ Ellipsis, because ὃ μὴ βίσιος πολὺς εἶη is excised. The line is used favourably at *Rep.* 516d7.

³⁴ Respectively, *Il.* 24. 10-12, 24. 12 (though our text of Homer reads differently), 18. 23-24 (the moment Achilles hears of Patroclus’ death), and 18.54. See Austin (2016) for an excellent and more extended treatment of grief and fear of death in the dialogue.

λέγομεν) that a *good* or *upstanding man* (ὁ ἐπιεικὴς ἀνὴρ) would not think the death of his friend a terrible thing and, moreover, would be most self-sufficient (αὐτάρκης) and least affected by external things (387de). The lamentations of Achilles over what Socrates claims is a small thing, in contest with epic and tragic poets, make Achilles less the target of spirited admiration than of disgust (δυσχεραίνω, 388a). That the same verb is used to characterize spirit implicitly at *Rep.* 401e and explicitly at Leontius at 439e suggests that, by his own account of acculturation in the *kalon*, Socrates means to solicit that foundational culturally-conditioned sense of beauty which guides one through life. His aim is to redirect patterns of attraction so that Achilles will not seem the beautiful exemplar of courage, masculinity, and excellence, at least not insofar as he is customarily imagined. The strategy is to lead interlocutors to infer that if Achilles is unable to rule himself, with all its heavy sociopolitical weight implied, then he is unable to regulate his appetites and bodily pleasures, as his exultation in his tears is supposed to show. That is to say, the interlocutors and audience is progressively led to conceive of Achilles along the lines of the effeminate auditor of sweet and soft melodies at 411a-c whose spirit has become enfeebled and aligned not with reason but with the appetites.

What about the charge of money-loving? It is highly distortive. Achilles does not desire money, gifts, or ransom as such, but rather cares about such material goods as tokens of honour. All the same, I would like to suggest, the above criticisms concerning lack of self-control, or better, self-rule, provide the *rhetorical* context in which we are meant to situate the charge of money-loving. On this proposal, Socrates is attempting to extend the association he has constructed between Achilles and immoderation. His gambit is to move from immoderate grief and anger to another form of immoderation that too will place Achilles in a shameful social category. The key

conceptual maneuver is to exploit an ambiguity in the Homeric concept of honour. Recall that τιμή comprises both a social standing based on psychological relations of esteem and the material goods that constitute its medium of exchange and display. This provides Socrates, on the one hand, a principled reason to associate honour closely with material goods, as he also does in his story in Book 8 of how timocracy and love of honour devolve into oligarchy and the amassment of wealth (*Rep.* 548c-551a). Most importantly, I believe, is that the value of both objects is anthropocentric in a way that the value of the objects of reason is not. With this point in mind, we may see that the nature of Homeric honour provides Socrates, on the other hand, with the conceptual space to deflate the seeming grandeur or self-importance of a life dominated honour and glory into mere desire to amass money or material goods. From the perspective of the cosmos, as against the perspective of the tragic worldview, considerations of honour and glory are meant to seem petty. Textually, the gambit is well-served by the term Socrates chooses to use in connection with money-loving at 391c, ἀνελευθερία. In connection with money it naturally means stinginess or illiberality, yet it never sheds its connotations of slavishness. Its use at 391c gestures back to the framing of the tragic orientation to death and life as *slavish*. In effect, Socrates has inscribed the figure of Achilles within an arc characterized by slavery in contrast to the beautiful ease and gracefulness of a *kalos kagathos*.

It would be a mistake to infer that Socrates or Plato considers the economy of esteem reducible to the market economy or desire for honour reducible to desire for money or other material goods. Not only have we seen considerable grounds to think that Socrates considers the *right kind* of love of honour motivationally beneficial and indeed necessary for virtue. Such an interpretation also ignores the local rhetorical context and its point. It is more judicious, I

maintain, to take Socrates to be soliciting a conviction that Glaucon and Adeimantus presumably share with the honour-lover described in Book 9, namely that considerations of honour are superior to and firmly distinct from *vulgar* pleasures of money (φορτικῇν, *Rep.* 581d). We need not assume that for Socrates this self-image and notion of honour is self-deceptive, however inadequate it may be if it also diminishes rational pleasures and pursuits. What we do need to assume is that Socrates is strategically *using* this conviction of his interlocutors to turn their spirited attitudes of disgust against the model of spirit embodied by Achilles by entangling or associating it with lack of self-control enslavement to appetites. This is to use one spirited tendency to *counter* another, the tendency to admire Achilles as beautiful.³⁵ The strategy to disgrace or shame Achilles at large aims to evoke these psychological operations.

The mechanisms of shame are particularly useful, indeed necessary, to achieve this end because shame enlists the very affective, non-rational attachments that Plato attempts to transform. That it works at the level of affection is crucial. It is only by working at this level that Socrates might begin to persuade his interlocutors subtly and progressively out of their commitment to Achilles as a paragon of beauty and thus block the tendency over which he is anxious, that one will acquire and in turn reinforce in the wider culture his characteristically tragic worldview. The sense of beauty and ugliness at issue, we have seen, is too foundational to be affected considerably, if at all, by rational argumentation and assessment. For our examination of musical-poetic education in Chapter 2 entails that for Plato this sense constitutes the basic

³⁵ I take myself to be elucidating in this stretch of the *Republic* a use of shame similar to that identified in the *Gorgias* by Moss (2005) and Tarnopolsky (2010).

framework or horizon from which putative arguments would be evaluated and to which they must be addressed in the first place.

More to the point, shame enlists the very affectively laden *self-images* that Plato attempts to transform. If, as I have argued, the relevant conceptions of beauty and ugliness organize various other thick evaluative categories, filiations and oppositions in terms of which self-conceptions are constituted and self-presentations monitored in practices of shame and honour (binaries of high and low, us and them, slave and freeborn, masculine and feminine, *etc.*), this is precisely the level on which to redirect admiration from the heroic ideal of beauty, intemperate spirit and, most fundamentally, tragic worldview embodied by Achilles. This is to begin to reconfigure their entire comportment so that they may become more sensitive in their perceptions and emboldened in their affections towards genuine beauty.

This chapter began by asking why Achilles is absent from the introduction of spirit at *Republic* 4. Let me conclude this chapter by suggesting that this passage contributes to the reconceptualization of the *kalon*, in tandem with the concept of spirit, which we have examined. Consider again how Socrates presents spirit after he tells the story of Leontius. He and Glaucon are discussing the possibility that this motivational force sides with appetites against reason. Socrates prods Glaucon, “I suppose you wouldn’t say that you’ve seen that kind of thing in yourself, nor, I suppose, in others.” What is a high-minded chap such as Glaucon to say? Never mind whether he is telling the truth when he denies that he has witnessed such acts of turpitude (least of all, of course, in his own person). The right question to ask is why, and with what ramifications, is the discussion of spirit framed in terms of a conflict between one set of desires classified as *forces* (βιάζωνται... ἐπιθυμίας, *Rep.* 440b) and another set of desires classified by

nobility (τῶν γενναίων, 440d). The terms of the contrast, we have noted, are psychologically, socially, and ethically loaded. No one wants to feel forced and only a beast or a slave lives by force. The terms are therefore set to incline Glaucon to envision human psychology in such a way that powerful reserves of shame and anger by nature (φύσει, 441a) marshal against undesirable forces to promote rational ends. This way of framing the question of the nature of spirited motivation allows Socrates to move more easily toward the conclusion that spirit is especially sensitive to reason (440e-441a), a move that vilifies the righteous anger by which Glaucon first identified spirit and which many Athenians would have championed in their social and legal practices.³⁶ Spirit is carefully introduced in terms designed to make its more aggressive and more common manifestations seem ugly and shameful and its subordination to reason seem natural and necessary, and to that extent, beautiful and deserving of emulation. This is only one change in perception, however, that Plato deems necessary to point the pursuit of the *kalon* down a more nourishing, if underdetermined, path. The next chapter examines another, one which deepens the ambivalent attraction of beauty in the concept of the *kalon*.

³⁶ See further Allen (2000). Although the category of force separates spirit from appetite, the distinction between spirit and reason is still essentially a distinction between power and authority. A well-trained spirit is reason's 'helper' (ἐπίκουρος, *Rep.* 441a), a term usually applied to mercenaries, often non-Greek. What or who counts as having authority, and whether some power is experienced as authoritative, depends on certain extra-psychological presuppositions. With regard to who lacks the authority to be more than a 'helper,' we need only remind ourselves of the cultural presuppositions behind Aristotle's denial of authoritative deliberative capacities to women and slaves.

Putting Poikilia in its Place

*There's a line between love and fascination
That's so hard to see on an evening such as this,
For they give the very same sensation.
When you're lost in the passion of a kiss...*
"My Foolish Heart", Ned Washington (lyrics)

§1 *Some Ambivalences*

There is, for Plato, a problem at the heart of the concept of the *kalon* insofar as its essence lies in appearance. That an entire way of living may seem but not be *kalon* led us to examine the spurious heroic ideal associated with Achilles, an ideal which proved uniquely threatening due to the regulative role of the *kalon* in the pursuit of a public conception of virtue. Yet the basis of this threat, as well as why ethical development must proceed in terms of the *kalon*, is ultimately the fact that such cultural ideals configure the horizon of *sensibility* from within which certain ways of living come to *seem* beautiful. As the *kalon* relates primarily to *sensible* appearance, then, it should not be surprising that for Plato and ancient Greek thinkers at large there is a special problem in the concept of the *kalon*, one that remains dear to the concept of beauty. Beyond the anxiety that something may *seem* but *not in fact be kalon*, beautiful, much less good, there is anxiety over the power of beauty to captivate the senses and the mind. One dominant concept of archaic and classical aesthetics embodies these tensions in a most potent form: the concept of *poikilia*. The concept names the fascinating effect of combining different colors, sounds or other materials, as well as ideals of variety in arts, persons, politics, and nature. The enraptured experience of *poikilia*

is often equated with the experience of beauty, yet it often crucially involves fear, suspicion, and danger.

To readers of Plato the association of *poikilia* with danger is likely familiar. Plato tends to prioritize unity, simplicity, and stability over values of variety, complexity, or mutability organized by the concept of *poikilia*. Through over twenty uses in the *Republic* alone, the concept becomes a cautionary label for ethically harmful sensory pleasure. Plato uses the motif to criticize democracy, likened to a multicolored cloak (ἱμάτιον ποικίλον, *Rep.* 557c5; 558c1-2, 559d7-8, 561e3-8), contemporary musical and cultural practices (398d7-399e12, 404d1-e6), and the seductive mechanisms of tragic poetry (604e1-605a6). All are said to excite appetitive desires, themselves figured monstrosously as an ever-changing “diverse (ποικίλου) and many-headed (πολυκεφάλου) beast” (588c7-10). It is thus with ample reason that almost all scholars conclude that Plato judges *poikilia* unequivocally harmful or that he denies it a share of beauty.¹

Such conclusions face an interpretative challenge, however. The challenge is to account for the connection to beauty and the positive role of *poikilia* sustained even within the *Republic*. Socrates favorably calls visible patterns of the movements of heavenly bodies, *poikilmata* in his phrase, the “most beautiful and most precise” of visible phenomena (κάλλιστα μὲν ἡγεῖσθαι καὶ ἀκριβέστατα, *Rep.* 529c9-d1). Although Socrates criticizes contemporary astronomers for superficially taking observable motions for true astronomical patterns, as though one could learn something “by looking with his head thrown back at decorations (*poikilmata*) on the ceiling” (ἐν

¹ See, e.g., Heath (1987): 105 n27; Rosenstock (1994); Halliwell (2002): 93-94, 325 (94 n47 notes a ‘rare concession’ at *Leg.* 665c); Moss (2007): 426, 435-37; Wallace (2009); Liebert (2010); Porter (2010): 86-7; Murray (2011): 189; Petraki (2011): esp. 64-5, 181-85, 235-50; Fitzgerald (2016): 38 (‘confirmed foe’). Grand-Clément (2011): 488 n436 recognizes the need for greater nuance. Tulli (2009) is my closest and, to my knowledge, sole ally in this venture, though he too accepts the above view of *poikilia* in the *Republic*.

ὁροφῇ ποικίλματα θεώμενος ἀνακύπτων, 529a10-b2), Socrates insists that these ‘decorations’ play an important heuristic role. Due to their beauty and precision, visible motions of heavenly bodies can and should be used as models in the study of intelligible astronomical patterns (ποικιλία παραδείγμασι χρηστέον, 529d8-9). Moreover, even if astronomy should proceed by means of mathematical problems, admiring the *poikilia* of the heavens can prompt one to realize that the cosmos is the most beautifully executed plan of a supremely intelligent craftsman (κάλλιστα... ἀπεργασία, 529e3; κάλλιστα τὰ τοιαῦτα ἔργα συστήσασθαι, 530a6-7). Let us set aside the fact that cosmic *poikilia* performs a similar function in the *Timaeus* (*Tim.* 39d2-40a9) or that other dialogues suggest pedagogical uses for pleurably variegated speech or song (*Leg.* 665c2-6, *Menex.* 234c4-235c4, *Phdr.* 277b5-c6). The question remains: why, in a dialogue which so abuses *poikilia*, does Plato use this concept to praise the beautiful arrangement of the cosmos?

Prevailing interpretations suppress or cannot readily address this question. There is need therefore to take a fresh look at the treatment of *poikilia* in the *Republic*. This chapter shows that the concept occupies a more complex role in Plato’s thinking and a more philosophically acute role for his thinking about the concept of the *kalon* than has hitherto been recognized.²

My central claim is that Plato attempts to reconfigure a prominent aesthetic sensibility which treats *poikilia* as constitutive of beauty. This sensibility I shall term *the aesthetics of poikilia* (§2). I show that Plato objects that the aesthetics of *poikilia* causes excessive focus on sensory pleasure and a fractured psychology (§3). That the objection targets an underlying sensibility, not *poikilia* per se, provides the key to a comprehensive reappraisal the concept for Plato. On the one

² It matters to the thesis and argumentative arc of this study, of course, that Plato’s project to disentangle the concepts of *poikilia* and the *kalon* will be nigh unintelligible if we suppress either aesthetic dimensions of the *kalon* or their connection to ethical evaluation and motivation, as we have seen is commonplace.

hand, it accommodates the positive role of *poikilia* and unifies the seemingly disparate criticisms of its political and artistic expressions. Plato can grant that fascinating variegation may be beautiful or ethically and epistemically valuable because his concern is to remove *poikilia* from the concept of beauty, to redirect admiration toward the beauty of unity grasped by the intellect. This is to put the aesthetics of *poikilia* in its place, as handmaiden to a distinctly philosophical orientation to beauty (§4). On the other hand, by noticing that the status of fascination in *poikilia* remains ambiguous, we may see that the concept attaches to a problem for Plato of whether or how to relate to fascinating yet dangerous attractions (§5). This problem adumbrated by the concept of *poikilia*, I show, tracks a wider ambivalence in Plato about the ethical and epistemic progress afforded by a *vision* of beauty. Although it can lead to something ‘higher’, this experience can entrench one further in sensory delights. At the heart of this problem, I propose, is a philosophical insight of Plato’s, that it is difficult to distinguish meaningfully between a harmful fascination and a salutary experience of (genuine) beauty. By restoring the Platonic concept of *poikilia* to its textual and historical richness, therefore, we shall continue to excavate the problems that animate the dominant role of beauty in his thinking. The especial danger that attractions to *poikilia* exhibit shall carry our interpretation forward as we examine, in the final chapter, the distinction between the *kalon* and the good in the psychology of erotic desire.

§2 *The Aesthetics of Poikilia*

We can notice that Plato attempts to reconfigure an aesthetic sensibility focused around *poikilia* only if we situate his critique within and against its conceptual background. Methodologically, it is pressing to bring this background to the fore. It has been seldom remarked, especially in the

philosophical literature, that Plato is primarily concerned with historically specific, descriptively thick, and affectively charged meanings of *poikilia*, rather than with such abstract or thin notions as variety, complexity, or multiplicity *simpliciter*. This section therefore sketches the history and filiations of the concept of *poikilia*, exposing patterns of use which Plato appropriates or subverts.

The adjective *poikilos* and verb *poikillō* are remarkably common in archaic poetry, given how sparse and fragmentary are the sources. The highly elastic use and the relation between their different senses were highly disputed for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Most recently, however, Adeline Grand-Clément has shown in a comprehensive lexical study that in archaic usage the adjective primarily praises the fascinating and brilliant effect of light shimmering across variegated surfaces, surfaces which combine and juxtapose various colours, patterns, fabrics, or other elements. It applies equally to the fascinating effect of varying or combining sounds, as when Pindar calls the *phorminx*, a kind of lyre, “many-voiced” (*poikilgarun*) to refer to its stunningly wide range (O.3.8). The verb *poikillō* names the activity of an expert or divine craftsman who produces such effects in weaving, embroidery, painting, sculpture, metallurgy, poetry and music. The adjective secondarily denotes a shifting or ambiguous quality, for example of fortune or wind, but foremost the mental agility of animals, heroes, or divinities with cunning intelligence (*mētis*), thought to signal human excellence (*aretē*) and *sophia*, commonly rendered ‘wisdom’ but better as ‘skill’ in this context.³ So emphatic is admiration of

³ Grand-Clément (2011): 418-88. LSJ *s.v.* *poikilos* captures the semantic range but treats the second cluster of uses as derivative and metaphorical. Detienne and Vernant (1991) show more intimate links in their study of *mētis*, on which see below. It is worth noting that the aural sense of *poikilos* does not necessarily depend on a more primary visual sense, if archaic Greek perceptual categories do not presuppose the fivefold distinction of the senses later formalized by classical theorists. Of special note in this regard is that *poikilos* particularly seems to emphasize a multi-sensual or synesthetic experience of beauty: LeVen (2013).

poikilia in archaic poetry that one scholar identifies an archaic aesthetic by delight in “the variegated nature of the objects of their senses: the sound, color, and movement of birds, insects, fishes, and animals; the subtle variations of pitch in music... and, above all, the play of light on surfaces of all kinds” (Fowler (1984): 119). It is necessary, however, to speak first in terms of an *effect* on a perceiver rather than of a variegated quality of an object because *poikilos* calls attention to a fascinated or enraptured *experience*. This is part of what I shall designate by the label *aesthetics of poikilia*: a distinctive sensibility oriented to surfaces – their variety, brilliance, movement, texture, abundance – as they are given to sensation. This category will help to expose a unified current running through the experience and evaluation of artifacts, nature, social life, and ethical character and conduct. Its most crucial expression, and this is the other part of what the label shall designate, is a conviction that the experience of *poikilia* constitutes or epitomizes the sensual experience of beauty.

The experience is often marked as such in archaic sources. Consider the erotic desire and wonder of Anchises at the sight of Aphrodite clad as a maiden in a *pampoikilos* robe:

Now when Anchises saw her, he marked well and wondered (θαύμαινέν) at her appearance and height and shining garments. For she was clad in a robe more radiant than the brightness of fire, beautiful, golden, *pampoikilon* (καλόν... παμποίκιλον), so that it shone (έλάμπετο) like the moon over her tender breasts, a wonder to behold (θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι). (*Hymn. Aphr.* 84-90)

Notice that *pampoikilos*, denoting rich embroidery in various colors, is interrelated with beauty, radiance, seduction, lush texture, and divinity. This last aspect is most evident when Anchises likens the maiden to a god (93-102). But consider also the robes kept in queen Hecuba’s vault:

all-adorned works (παμποίκιλα ἔργα) of Sidonian women... Hecuba chose one and brought it as an offering to Athena, the one that was most beautiful in its embroidering

and greatest that it shone like a star (κάλλιστος ἔην ποικίλμασιν μέγιστος, ἀστὴρ δ' ὥς ἀπέλαμπεν). (*Il.* 6. 289-94)

These *pampoikila* robes are all beautiful. The one Hecuba selects is judged most beautiful for just that reason, for the way its complexly patterned and colored threads shine with celestial brilliance. We see further that (*pam*)*poikilos* connotes a special status, also betrayed in the privileged role of *poikilia* in archaic gift exchange.⁴ These handiworks are treasured: gifts for the queen, kept in a vault, and appropriate for entreating Athena.

The essential point, however, is this. Whether of persons or artifacts, the power of *poikilia* to enchant the senses and mind is deeply ambivalent even in sources which relish this experience as the experience of beauty. I shall focus on one exemplary passage, Odysseus's description of his marvelous brooch:

The front part was artfully wrought (δαίδαλον): a hound held a dappled (ποίκιλον) fawn in his forepaws, preying on it as it struggled; and all marveled at it (θαυμάζεσκον), how though they were golden (ὥς οἱ χρύσειοι ἐόντες), it preyed on the fawn and strangled it, and the fawn struggled with his feet as he tried to escape. (*Od.* 19. 227-31)

The Homeric poet again locates wonder and, by implication, beauty in fascinating optic effects, marked by *poikilos* and its semantic cousin *daidalos*, which emphasizes craft elaboration. Here *poikilos* refers first to the dappled aspect and so textured relief of the golden fawn, trading on its application to an animal's spotted coat, iridescent snakeskin, multicolored or patterned plumage.⁵

The term also implicates the apparent movement of the fawn and hound, the result of light

⁴ Gift exchange: e.g., *Od.* 15. 104-8, 125-27, 205-7; 18. 292-96 (collocated with περικαλλέα); *Sapph.* fr. 44.8-10. Pindar adapts this motif to athletic contexts (*N.*10.35-36) and, arguably, to mobilize admiration for his own craftsmanship (fr. 179, with Kurke (1992): 112-14).

⁵ Horse: *Pi.* *P.*2.8; leopard: *Aes.* Perry 12; snake: *Pi.* *P.*4.249, 10.46, 8.46; *Alcm.* fr. 1.66, *Theogn.* 1.602; bird: *Pi.* *P.*4.214-16; *Alc.* fr. 345.2.

dancing across the elaborate gold surface. Both referents structure perception around *poikilia* as *sensuous surface*. A consequence of heightened interest in the brilliance, movement, and texture of surfaces, the viewers perceive at once the animals and the gold material of the brooch, marveling at how inanimate metal seems to come alive by means of the goldsmith's awesome skill.⁶

And yet the scene depicted is a violent struggle of life and death. It symbolizes the effect of *poikilia*: the hound captures the fawn as the brooch captivates its viewers. The comparison is encouraged by the nested frames which assimilate the imagination of the internal (and perhaps external) audience to the gazes of the awestruck viewers and to the paralyzed fawn meeting the ferocious gaze (as one could render λάω) of the hound.⁷ As the fawn fears the hound, the viewers fear, in their wonder, the *poikilia* of the brooch; auditors, we shall see, are and should be suspicious of Odysseus and his tale. The concept of *poikilia* contains this element of danger. Note in this regard that while above is a fawn, *poikiloi* animals (particularly snakes) are typically *dangerous*.⁸ Their multicolored, iridescent, or complexly patterned skin allows them to camouflage, seduce prey, or stun predators. Their beautiful exterior, in other words, is focally related to that cunning intelligence, *mētis*, which Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant have shown to characterize virtue or excellence (*aretē*) and skill or wisdom (*sophia*) in archaic Greek thought.⁹ In this

⁶ See Neer (2010): 59, 67, though the concept of *poikilia* is not so generous as to describe drapery in and of itself as 'a shifting, variegated, complex sort of thing' or the apprehension of an image along with its material support ('*poikilia* is the Greek word for this doubleness of seeing', 113). Neer (2002), to which the latter quotation refers the reader, convincingly shows only the weaker claim that there is great heuristic value of applying the concept of *poikilia* to the experience and interpretation of red figure vase-painting.

⁷ The alternate rendering is defended by Prier (1989): 32 and Porter (2010): 447.

⁸ To my knowledge, this is the sole use of *poikilos* for prey. It seems less an outlier than an inversion of the common associations of the *poikilia* of animals with predatory or defensive tactics.

connection, *poikilos* signifies the subtlety of a practical intelligence to adapt to circumstances and outwit opponents through foresight, tricks, and deceit. Such intelligence requires the same perceptual sensitivity to ever-shifting phenomena as characterizes those fascinated by shimmering and variegated materials. It calls for heightened awareness and supple response to demands of shifting circumstances. To the eyes and imaginations of archaic Greeks, in turn, such cunning intelligence betrays a beautiful character. Hence Aesop's fable of the fox and the leopard:

The fox and the leopard were disputing their beauty (περὶ κάλλους ἥριζον). The leopard displayed each of the spots adorning his skin (τὴν τοῦ σώματος ποικιλίαν προβαλλομένης), but the fox, interrupting him, said, 'And how much more beautiful (καλλίων) than you am I, adorned not in body but soul' (τὴν δὲ ψύχην πεποίκιλμαι). (Aes. Perry 12)

It is assumed that *poikilia* is sufficient, if not necessary, for beauty. The fox, in fact, displays his beautiful wiles in constructing the contest so that, despite his unremarkable coat, he is victorious.

This sort of cunning, though much admired, is perceived as threatening. Like all *poikilia* its fascinating beauty can manipulate minds. We see this fulsomely when Aphrodite, whom Sappho memorably invokes as "*poikilothron*'... wile-weaving" (fr. 1.1-2), lends Hera her specifically *poikilos* ribbon to seduce Zeus in the 'deception' scene at *Iliad* 14.¹⁰

Aphrodite spoke and from her breasts unbound the elaborate, pattern-pierced ribbon (κεστὸν ἱμάντα | ποικίλον), with all enchantments (οἱ θελκτήρια) inlaid, with erotic appeal and desire there... 'Take this ribbon and hide it away in the fold of your bosom. It is elaborate (ποικίλον), all things inlaid. And I think whatever is your heart's desire shall not go unaccomplished.' (*Il.* 14. 214-21)

⁹ Detienne and Vernant (1991): 18-44.

¹⁰ Compare Pi. *P.* 4.212-16, where Aphrodite attaches specifically a *poikilon* wryneck, known for its complex plumage and serpentine neck movement, to the wheel with which Jason seduces and maddens Medea. Eur. *Med.* 1159 similarly connects *poikilia* to feminized erotic charm. I read *poikilothronos* at Sapph. fr. 1.1, rather than the variant *poikilophrōn* ('of subtle mind'), since the latter seems needlessly repetitive in context.

So too, at the climax of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, does Clytemnestra lead Agamemnon into his house and to his death with purple tapestries so richly brodered that they are fit only for gods. The king hesitates to tread them, lest he provoke divine envy: "Being mortal, it is not for me or anyone to step on *poikilois* beauties (ἐν ποικίλοις... κάλλεσιν) without fear (ἄνευ φόβου)" (Ag. 923-24; cf. 922-26, 946-47). Clytemnestra arguably appeals to his hubris that others envy the extraordinary wealth and welcome which the tapestries make vivid. Yet however opaque is his psychology, the sensuously seductive beauty of *poikilia* and its dangers are clear. Agamemnon thrice repeats the term (923, 926, 936) before following the path inside to be bound and butchered by Clytemnestra, no longer psychologically but physically ensnared by the queen's intricately woven webs.¹¹

The description of the brooch we have been explicating obeys the same structure: a *poikilos* mind deviously uses a *poikilos* item. None other than wily Odysseus, lauded *poikilomētis* for his mental agility and shapeshifting,¹² describes the brooch in an artful speech which foregrounds issues of truth-telling and deception. Disguised as a beggar, Odysseus attempts to convince Penelope that he (the beggar) entertained Odysseus, which of course he did not. Only moments earlier we are told that Odysseus makes many falsehoods seem like truth (*Il.* 19. 203). This constitutes high praise in the agonistic context of archaic poetry – how better to prove persuasive ability than by convincing someone of something *false*? – yet even in this context such cleverness

¹¹ Web or net imagery: Ag. 949, 1048, 1382, 1492. Mueller (2016): 55-6 duly notes that Clytemnestra's verbal manipulation is intertwined with the seduction of *poikilia*.

¹² Odysseus as *poikilomētis*: *Il.* 11. 482; *Od.* 3. 163, 13. 293; Eur. *IA* 526; as *poikilboulos*: Anth. Plan. IV.300.5. Both epithets are used of Hermes (*Orph. Hym.* 28, *Hymn. Herm.* 155); the former of Zeus (*Hymn. Apoll.* 322), the latter of Prometheus (*Hes. Theog.* 521).

garners criticism, as it will in classical political and artistic contexts.¹³ Penelope herself is suspicious, testing the beggar by asking what Odysseus was wearing; the vivid description of the brooch convinces her. The Homeric poet thus transposes visual wonder at the *poikilia* of the brooch onto the audience's rapt yet unknowing admiration at the *poikilia* of Odysseus, while emphasizing the epistemic and ethical ambiguities of such experiences. Not accidentally, the brooch like Odysseus is duplicitous: double-clasped and pinned on a double-folded cloak (διπλῆν: αὐτὰρ οἱ περὶ ὄνη χρυσοῖο τέτυκτο αὐλοῖσιν διδύμοισι, 226). This clever inclusion, I propose, is emblematic of a deep ambivalence which pervades delight in *poikilia*.

Consider in this vein the power of beautifully variegated song. The concept of *poikilia* served archaic poets especially well to praise their own abilities to weave together different elements, including sounds, meters, text setting, and accompaniment, and specifically to vary one continuous tune as it moves along, a principle which could structure a single ode or even the rhapsodic transmission of poetry (Nagy (1996): 32-65). What I should like to emphasize is that the concept calls attention specifically to the seductive and importantly sensuous pleasure of beautiful song. When Pindar acclaims how well he combined the sounds of the “many-voiced lyre” with pipes and text setting, he calls attention not only to his compositional skill but also to the rich sonic texture of his odes (O.3.8-9). So too when he describes one of his odes as a *poikilon* headband (fr. 179.1-2); perhaps an allusion to the fragments of Sappho and Alcman cited earlier, this imagery emphasizes the materiality of variegated sounds in praising the beauty of the ode.

¹³ See further Worman (2002): esp. 108-92. Archaic criticism: *e.g.*, *Od.* 8. 166-77, 11. 363-69, 13. 291-99, 17. 518-21; Aesch. *Eu.* 460 and Theogn. 602-2 (contrast ll. 213-18 and 1071-74, discussed below), with Pratt (1993): 57-71. Classical criticism: *e.g.*, Thuc. 2.39.1, Ar. *Eq.* 758-59 (but see l. 686: *poikilos* could still praise the Sausage-Seller for his scheming), Eur. *Supp.* 187, Pl. *Hip. Min.* 363b-365b.

All the same, Pindar could also use the term *poikilos* to caution against the same skill of other poets, warning that their variegated *muthoi* may seduce one into accepting falsehoods (δεδαίδαλμένοι ψεύδεσι ποικίλοις μῦθοι, *O.* 1.29).¹⁴ Praise of beautiful song in terms of *poikilia* is, like Agamemnon, not without worry.

Ambivalence in archaic sources toward *poikilia* becomes more marked in classical Athenian lexical use in three distinct ways. First, cunning and deceit become opposed to ideals of frank speech and public transparency on which the democracy prided itself.¹⁵ Second, the term *poikilos* acquires pejorative connotations of barbarian (non-Greek and derogatorily ‘other’) or effeminate tendencies. This use self-consciously denies the social meaning and value which 6th-century BCE aristocrats assigned to *poikilia*. Aristocrats appropriated from Persia and eastern Greece a luxurious lifestyle to display their superiority once *nouveaux riches* non-aristocrats started to compete in wealth. Characterized by expensive flowing garments, long and elaborate coiffure, perfume, gold, and jewelry – Alcman’s exquisitely beautiful spangled bracelet (ποικίλος δράκων παγχρύσιος, *Parth.* 1.66-68), the headband Sappho covets ([μ]ιτράναν... ποικίλαν, fr. 98a.10-11) – the ‘politics of *habrosynē*’ placed the beauty and social currency of *poikilia* at the center of a bid for status.¹⁶ Later, those sympathetic to democracy use the term *poikilos* to symbolize and stigmatize political enemies either abroad in Persia or local vestiges of the aristocracy. In a third

¹⁴ See further Steiner (1986): 61-3. For Pindar’s self-ascription of *poikilia*, see also *O.* 4.2-3, 6.87; *P.* 9.77; *N.* 4.14, 5.41-2, 8.15.

¹⁵ *Eur. Supp.* 187 and *Thuc.* 2.39.1 associate *poikilia* with deceitful tactics of Sparta.

¹⁶ Grand-Clément (2011): 328-38. Cf. Aesch. *Ag.* 918-19: μὴ γυναικὸς ἐν τρόποις ἐμὲ λαβρυνε, μηδὲ βαρβάρου; *Pers.* 836, *Eur. Bac.* 821-835. Kurke (1992): 93-100 argues persuasively, in my opinion, that Sappho’s general emphasis on sensuality belongs to this sociopolitical context: e.g., fr. 39.2: “a *poikilos* sandal was covering her feet, a beautiful piece of Lydian work.”

and ideologically anti-democratic use, to which we shall return, critics of what has come to be known as New Music invoke musical complexity as a metaphor for sociopolitical disorder and decline. This third use also betrays a semantic tendency of *poikilos* toward more abstract meanings, now more tenuously connected to the fascinated experience and sensuous beauty of variegated materials.

These lexical changes have sometimes been taken to reflect radical changes between archaic and classical sensibilities, in which case Plato would have little cause to displace an (hypothetically defunct) aesthetics of *poikilia*. However, material evidence suggests that *poikilia* remains a regulative principle of artistic production and aesthetic reception. Richard Neer has argued convincingly, for example, that red-figure painter-potters and classical sculptors still aim chiefly to create artifacts that enchant, arouse, or confound beholders through their elaboration, brilliant sheen, and visual ambiguity.¹⁷ From the lexical data, therefore, we cannot infer that the classical concept of *poikilia* no longer tracks modes of sensual experience or subsumes them “under the sign of beauty.”¹⁸ It seems more judicious to infer that the concept becomes *more contested* along the following two dimensions: (1) it is sometimes disputed, and so becomes disputable, whether what falls under the concept is beautiful or otherwise valuable; and more significantly, (2) the concept comes to function as a label with which to claim aesthetic, social, or political status for oneself or to deny such claims made by others. Both dimensions find

¹⁷ Neer (2002) and (2010). Keuls (1978) presents related evidence in the painterly practice of *skiagraphia*.

¹⁸ So, LeVen (2013): 241, with qualifications. Porter (2010) tends more so in the direction of this claim. This is not to deny important changes in sensibility, suggested by abstraction in the concept of harmony, for example, from an emphasis on the variety, difference, and particularity of compositional elements rather than on the unity of the item composed. See further Wersinger (2001): 24.

particularly sharp expression in a fragment of Pratinas (PMG 708.5-10 = Ath. *Deipn.* 14.617b-f). His satyr chorus claims the priority of their swanlike ‘song of variegated wing’ (οἷά τε κύκνον ἄγοντα ποικιλόπτερον μέλος) over the *aulos*, derisively compared to the unmusical breath of a spotted toad (τὸν φρυγέου ποικίλου πνοάν).¹⁹ Pratinas does not so much contrast two kinds of musical *poikilia* as use the one concept “aggressively and defensively,” as W.B. Gallie remarked of all controversial or contested concepts, to praise his own art while denying the priority that *auletes* claim for theirs under the banner of *poikilia*.²⁰

Such contestation is explicable if, and only if, *poikilia* remains conceptually tied to beauty, excellence, and skill. We do well, therefore, to approach Plato’s critique not as a final nail in the coffin of *poikilia* but as a further move with this concept in already messy and mobile conceptual terrain. If the aesthetics of *poikilia* becomes less fulsome or differently structured in classical experience, it nonetheless remains alive and well. Nowhere more so, surmises Plato, than in Athenian democracy.

§3 *The Taste of Democracy*

We may now examine how, in the *Republic*, Plato exploits these tensions in the concept of *poikilia* to undermine it as a criterion of beauty. In his view, such a criterion causes undue focus on sensory experience and pleasure and, in turn, a fractured psychology. This line of thought

¹⁹ Reading the variant ποικίλαν πνοάν as the *lectio difficilior*, with Martin (2003): 166 (who translates ‘mottled toad-breath’), would block what may be an additional insinuation that the *aulete*’s bloated cheeks make him *look* ugly like a toad, to say nothing of the shameful sexual overtones.

²⁰ Gallie (1955-56): 172. The defensive move is most apt if the fragment of Pratinas dates to the late fifth-century BCE, in which case he may be criticizing the innovations of so-called New Musicians.

depends on an assumption which we saw animates the cultural scheme at *Rep.* 2-3 and its irreducibly social psychology: one emulates what one admires as beautiful (*Rep.* 401b1-402a6, 500c7-9). A version of the principle that like encourages like (425c1-2), the aspect of this assumption on which to concentrate is that patterns of attention and attraction beget similar psychological patterns. Before approaching how this assumption informs a distinctly *philosophical* orientation toward beauty opposed to the aesthetics of *poikilia*, we must first expose a bright thread of derogatory references to *poikilia* throughout the dialogue. I focus on the most conspicuous attempts to sever its conceptual connection to the *kalon*, its standing as a criterion of beauty.

Our target passage comes in *Republic* 8. Socrates invokes a carefully chosen textile metaphor to describe the ruling principles and false appeal of Athenian democracy.

It runs the risk, I said, that this is the most beautiful of the constitutions. Like an elaborate cloak embroidered in all colours, this city, embroidered with all kinds of character, would appear most beautiful. And many people would probably judge it most beautiful, as women and children do when they see shimmering multicolored things.²¹

(*Rep.* 557c)

κινδυνεύει, ἥν δ' ἐγώ, καλλίστη αὕτη τῶν πολιτειῶν εἶναι: ὥσπερ ἱμάτιον ποικίλον πᾶσιν ἄνθεσι πεποικιλμένον, οὕτω καὶ αὕτη πᾶσιν ἡθεσιν πεποικιλμένη καλλίστη ἂν φαίνοιτο. καὶ ἴσως μὲν, ἥν δ' ἐγώ, καὶ ταύτην, ὥσπερ οἱ παῖδες τε καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες τὰ ποικίλα θεώμενοι, καλλίστην ἂν πολλοὶ κρίνειαν.

This metaphor works on many levels. The obvious place to begin is the collocation of '(most) beautiful' with cognates of *poikilos*. This could have little sense or force had the assumption that beauty is anchored in *poikilia* not remained prominent. Plato constructs the passage to undermine

²¹ 'Colours' for ἄνθεσι, following Adam (1902) n. *ad. loc.* (cf. *Rep.* 429d), not flowers, as was "generally supposed" then as it is now, although 'flowers' would allude to an archaic connection between *poikilia* and flowers. The choice is moot if, as I suspect, Plato wants to strike the clever assonance ἄνθεσι—ἡθεσι. 'Shimmering' since τὰ ποικίλα implies radiance and movement.

that assumption. Socrates denigrates many an archaic and classical male as a woman or child for his delight in fascinating variegation. His strategy is to turn the sensuousness and superficiality of *poikilia* against itself.²² Plato makes these qualities seem deficient, even deceptive – stabbing archaic poets with their own foil – by having Socrates progressively weaken the relation of *poikilia* to beauty. He begins cagily enough. He hazards a guess (κινδυνεύει) that democracy *is* (εἶναι) the most beautiful constitution. (*Hazard* is exactly the right term, I think: κινδυνεύω can simply imply uncertainty, but we might hear its common connotations of risk, not least because of the pre-Platonic note of danger in the concept of *poikilia*, here intensified.) The reason is that democracy is most diverse since it permits everyone to live as he pleases (557b). Socrates then tempers his claim, saying that democracy *would appear* (ἄν φαίνοιτο) most beautiful. Although this need not imply that such beautiful appearance is false, it suggests more doubt – as does the shift from indicative to optative moods – and pushes in a more worrisome direction than did Sappho, for example, the notion that *qua* surface, *poikilia* conceals. The claim becomes still weaker when Socrates shifts grammatical subjects from democracy to the many who would *probably judge* (ἴσως... κρίνειαν) it most beautiful.²³ By the time Socrates compares the many to women and children who delight in fascinating variety of colours (sounds, fabrics, etc.) he has implied that they are mistaken. They mistake fascinating variety for genuine beauty.

²² Liebert (2010): 111 remarks similarly that Socrates turns the poetic tradition's conception of pleasure as 'sweet' against itself, yet wrongly assumes that, for Plato, "aesthetic" and "philosophical" values are "incommensurate," benefit and pleasure "inversely proportionate" (112) and "mutually exclusive" (114). This view reiterates the orthodoxy questioned below of an unequivocal hostility toward poetry in the *Republic*, whether on account of its *poikilia* or not.

²³ Well observed by Villacèque (2010): 143.

The mistake is structurally similar to another the many are said to make. Seduced by the “musical colours” (τῆς μουσικῆς χρωμάτων) of poetry – verse sung in naturally charming metres, rhythms, and harmonies (φύσει... κήλησιν) – the many falsely believe that mimetic poets are experts in their subject matter. These musical colours constitute *poikilia* or else approximate its condition in two respects. First, they are conceived as a *surface*. Not a surface on which to linger, but to be stripped off like clothing (γυμνωθέντα). Disrobed, mimetic poetry would no longer seem beautiful, Socrates maintains, but, switching erotic metaphors, resemble a boy whose bloom of youth had gone (*Rep.* 601ab). Second, poets employ these musical colours to charm the senses. Their effect is akin to the magical power (γοητείας) of painterly *poikilia* by which painters trick the non-rational element of the soul, juxtaposing various hues and tints to give the impression of depth in the technique of *skiagraphia* (602d).²⁴ In all of these cases, Socrates suggests that to consider such charming façades first and foremost beautiful is to adopt an uncritical gaze, like a child who would judge a tyrant beautiful “from the outside” (ἔξωθεν), on account of his majestic and theatrical public persona, without critical examination into his character (ὅς δύναται τῇ διανοίᾳ εἰς ἀνδρὸς ἥθος ἐνδὺς διιδεῖν, 577a).²⁵

I say the nature of beauty is at issue because the passage neither states nor implies that the diversity of democracy is *not* beautiful. It is sometimes thought to do so. One reason offered which will not suffice is that *poikilos* is obviously wholly pejorative or by itself connotes “*merely*

²⁴ Deception is foreground in the first use of *poikilos* in the *Republic* at 365c, also in connection with *skiagraphia*: the unjust person who pretends to be just is greedy and crafty (κερδαλέαν καὶ ποικίλην) like the fox at Arch. fr. 86-89, wrapping his injustice in an illusory façade of virtue (σκιαγραφίαν ἀρετῆς).

²⁵ Cf. *Rep.* 577b: in private the tyrant’s “tragic attire may be seen stripped off”, γυμνὸς ἂν ὀφθεῖη τῆς τραγικῆς σκευῆς.

superficial beauty.”²⁶ That force is the result, not the precedent, of passages such as this. Notice by comparison that Socrates takes pains to diagnose a structurally similar mistake the many are said to make about mimetic poetry. Seduced by its musical colors (τῆς μουσικῆς χρωμάτων) – verse sung in naturally charming metres, rhythms, and harmonies (φύσει... κήλησιν) – they falsely believe mimetic poets experts in their subject matter (*Rep.* 601a5-b2). That these charms are akin to the magical power (γοητεία) by which painters juxtapose hues and tints to give the impression of depth suggests that Socrates is concerned with forms of poetic and painterly *poikilia* (602d5).²⁷ Even if the texture of mimetic poetry does not exactly constitute *poikilia*, it approximates its nature as sensuous surface. Socrates pointedly emphasizes that it is a surface not on which to linger but to be stripped off like clothing (γυμνωθέντα, 601b2-3). Disrobed, he maintains, mimetic poetry would no longer seem beautiful, like a boy bereft of his bloom of youth (601b7-9). This sequence of passages suggests that the fascinating variegation of democracy or poetry seems beautiful first and foremost if one adopts an uncritical gaze, like a child who judges the hyper-*poikilos* tyrant beautiful superficially ‘from the outside’ (ἐξωθεν), impressed by his majesty and theatricality, without examining his character (577a3-7).²⁸

²⁶ So, Rosenstock (1994): 377; *emph. added*. See also Moss (2007): 426 and Petraki (2011): 15 n. 28, 242-43. Monoson (2000): 170-71 (‘charming and delightful’) captures the psychological and evaluative nuance, though does not pursue the relation of *poikilia* to beauty.

²⁷ The link to deception and painterly *skiagraphia* is prepared by the first use of *poikil*- terms in the dialogue. At *Rep.* 365c3-6, the cunning (ποικίλην) unjust person pretending to be just cloaks injustice by a façade of virtue (σκιαγραφίαν ἀρετῆς).

²⁸ So too the tyrant’s “tragic attire may be seen stripped off” in private (γυμνὸς ἂν ὁφθείη τῆς τραγικῆς σκευῆς, *Rep.* 577b1). His bodyguard, like the tyrant himself, is “beautiful and numerous and various (*poikilon*) and never the same as itself” (568d6-7). Here, too, *poikilos* retains its thick sociopolitical associations: the guard is comprised of *foreign* mercenaries (567e1).

Yet whereas the child is simply wrong, the same cannot be said determinately of those who judge democracy (and mimetic poetry, I shall suggest) beautiful. We may conclude only that they are wrong to think that *poikilia* constitutes beauty or is necessary or sufficient for it. Indeed, if the colors (ἄνθεσι) of the democratic cloak are qualitatively like the bloom of youth (τὸ ἄνθος) to which poetic *poikilia* is compared, it should follow that they are beautiful, if only in a superficial and fleeting way.²⁹ We might begin to detect in this textual indeterminacy some ambivalence about the aesthetic status of *poikilia* and the value of its experience. Plato is not ambivalent, however, about the need to displace its prominence as a criterion of beauty.

What is the harm? The tacit argument is that this pattern of attention and admiration encourages an unbridled pursuit of sensory pleasure, leading one ultimately to become psychologically fractured. If proponents valorize such a constitution as diverse or multifaceted, for Plato it opposes the normative desire of reason to establish a unified motivational life. The materials of this argument, I suggest, reside in the fact that the simile of the multicolored cloak is meant not only to capture the diversity of democracy but to diagnose the aesthetics of *poikilia* as its animating principle. Notice first that the cloak simile turns not just the poetic tradition but the self-representation of Athenian democracy on its head. Whereas democratic ideology celebrates the *polis* as a single entity uniting through collective debate a multitude of diverse interests and ways of living, Socrates denies that democracy is *a* constitution at all. He insists it is a plurality, as barely integral as a motley patchwork. The simile is particularly pointed because it refers

²⁹ It is possible, though I think unlikely, that Socrates admires the diversity of democracy as it provides some setting for philosophy or furnishes for reflection the complexity of human psychology. So, Monoson (2000): 166-69 and 223-26, though her account strains to compare the use of models at *Rep.* 529d8-9 with 557d8. Blondell (2002): 67, 111, 142-61 notes, more promisingly in this direction, the ‘democratic’ versatility of Socrates.

obliquely to and neutralizes two symbols with which the democracy constructed and glorified its identity. One is the *peplos* woven for Athena for the Panatheneiac procession. Marking the very start of the religious calendar, the festival was especially significant for Athenians to represent to themselves their mythic founding, autochthony, and collective unity, and to the rest of Greece every fourth year, their wealth and hegemony. Another is plausibly the Stoa Poikilē, the portico in the agora lined with frescoes depicting military victories in the (sometimes mythic) history of Athens, most notably at Marathon. These symbols employ *poikilia* artistically to valorize the same principle as a principle of political composition.

If these cultural references strengthen the affinity between *poikilia* and democracy, it is to expose a deeper accord in their shared emphasis on immediate and sensory pleasures. Consider the claim that the democratic notion of freedom, radical negative freedom, is anarchy under a fine label (*Rep.* 560e). Its touchstone of equality, Socrates maintains, is nothing more and nothing less than institutionalized license. Under democracy, moderation and shame become revalued as boorish and illiberal (ἀγροικίαν καὶ ἀνελευθερίαν, 560d) because they inhibit the indiscriminate gratification of any desire which may happen to arise (557e-558a, 560e-561c). When, moments after the cloak simile, Socrates concludes that democracy seems “a pleasurable constitution, anarchic and variegated” (ἡδεῖα πολιτεία καὶ ἄναρχος καὶ ποικίλη, 558c), he does more than exploit the worrisome connection between *poikilia* and sensory pleasure in archaic poetry. He figures the connection one of the motivating impulses of the democratic regime. We might note that this strategy cleverly turns against democracy the anti-aristocrat rhetoric of democrats who wielded the term *poikilos* to indict élite luxury an emasculate or barbarian appetite for all things sensual. The strategy is especially apt since, as Robert Seager, Josiah Ober, and others remind us,

democracy usurped and redefined existing political and ethical concepts, leading in many cases to “the democratic pillaging of aristocratic values” (Seager (1982): 268).³⁰ To find a vocabulary by which to express his criticism, then, Plato relies on an aristocratic homage, given a distinctly democratic valence, to unmask the self-image of democracy. Whatever its noble pretensions, he suggests, the appeal of democracy depends on a taste for the variety of pleasure and the pleasure of variety, twin sides of the aesthetics of *poikilia*.

Socrates elaborates the point in his description of the ‘democratic’ individual. Like the polity he typifies, “he is also a multifarious man, full of all sorts of characters, beautiful and multicolored” (καὶ παντοδαπὸν τε καὶ πλείστων ἡθῶν μεστόν, καὶ τὸν καλὸν τε καὶ ποικίλον, *Rep.* 561e). The collocation of *poikilon* and *kalon*, seemingly ironic, again evokes and rejects the conceptual connection between beauty and *poikilia*. That connection lies behind the envy that Socrates supposes many would feel at someone endowed with so great and so diverse a set of habits or ways of living. Specifically, Socrates takes aim at the notion that each citizen can and should pursue all manner of political tasks. This is the beautiful image of Odysseus made political.³¹ Socrates believes the ideal champions a shameless pursuit of fleeting desires. Shameless, since it treats all desires equally with neither order nor necessity (561d). Fleeting, since to pursue all equally is to pursue none committedly. The democratic individual may *seem* a beautiful character to emulate on account of his diversity, but only if one adopts a perspective as superficial as the person who lives this way. For the fascinating shimmer cast by the democratic

³⁰ Ober (1996): 155 applies this point to the present passage.

³¹ Cf. Thuc. 2.41.1 with Knox (1964): 121-22: “The democratic viewpoint... is Odyssean – an ideal of versatility, adaptability, diplomatic skill, and intellectual curiosity, insisting on success combined with glory rather than sacrificed for it.”

individual is simply the effect of his wavering motivations. Sometimes he drinks heavily while delighting in the *aulos*, sometimes he diets and has only water; sometimes he exercises, sometimes not; sometimes he busies himself with what seems to him philosophy; *often* (πολλάκις), he leaps into political debates, speaking and acting according to whatever momentary whim he fancies (561cd). If this last clause exaggerates, and psychologizes, a common trope of how orators could constantly sway the democratic assembly, the entire account subverts the Odyssean ideal of a citizen who can and should perform all manner of tasks. The ideal seems beautiful and imitable, Socrates suggests, only to those as focused on superficiality, variegation, and pleasure as someone who lives this way. In placing all pleasures on a par, the motivational set of the democratic individual lacks shame, order, and commitment. His diverse and fleeting motivations may cast a fascinating shimmer, but his life is particularly attractive to those who have been reared to take such effects for a beautiful character. It is necessary, therefore, to recognize that while Socrates' criticism principally targets Athenian democracy, it extends more broadly and deeply to an aesthetic sensibility which supports and is supported by it.

The scope of the criticism must be emphasized to appreciate also that the image of the democratic individual subtly indicts the aristocracy for *its* delight in *poikilia*. If the charge against democracy is 'aristocratic', as is commonly claimed, it is so only superficially and strategically. Not only does the simile of the multicolored cloak grant the specific anti-aristocratic valence which democrats give to the term *poikilos*. The quip that if the democratic individual "happens to admire soldiers, he's carried that way, if money-makers, that way" (κἄν ποτέ τινος πολεμικοῦς ζηλώσῃ, ταύτῃ φέρεται, ἢ χρηματιστικούς, ἐπὶ τοῦτ' αὖ, *Rep.* 561d5-7) seems deliberately to

parody a distinctly aristocratic ideal of a *poikilon ēthos*. This ideal is best attested to in the Theognidean corpus:

To all your friends keep turning your *poikilon ēthos*, properly mixing your temperament to the like of each. Cultivate the temperament of a tangled cuttlefish, which always looks like whatever rock it has just clung to. Now be like this; then, at another time, be like someone else in your coloring. Surely skill is better than inflexibility.

(Theogn. 213-18 ≈ 1071-74)

θυμέ, φίλους κατὰ πάντας ἐπίστρεφε ποικίλον ἦθος,
ὀργὴν συμμίσγων ἦντιν' ἕκαστος ἔχει.
πολύπου ὀργὴν ἴσχε πολυπλόκου, ὅς ποτὶ πέτρῃ
τῇ προσομιλήσῃ τοῖος ἰδεῖν ἐφάνη:
νῦν μὲν τῇδ' ἐφέπου, τότε δ' ἄλλοιός χροῶ γίνου.
κρέσσων τοι σοφίῃ γίνεταί ἀτροπίης.

The ideal is one of élite sociability: one adjusts to social proprieties to mingle well with companions. This notion of a *poikilon ēthos* too refracts the beautiful image of Odysseus, yet in a way politically opposed to the democratic notion. That aristocrats sing this verse at symposia means that they extol this variable character in opposition to emerging democratic values. Importantly, they enact this sort of character by mingling their temperaments as they consolidate ties of nobility but also through several activities which make the ideal of a involve changeable personalities, such as performing poetry as different speakers, donning masks in the form of 'eye-cups' and, of course, inebriation.³²

Socrates contains the aristocratic ideal of a *poikilon ēthos* in his criticism of the democratic ideal – just as the democratic personality contains, so to speak, a symposiast drinking and listening to the *aulos* – to yoke these unlikely bedfellows together at the level of aesthetic-cum-ethical principle. Democracy and aristocracy each organize around *poikilia*, he claims, where the

³² Neer (2002) provides an excellent discussion of political functions of *poikilia* on sympotic ware.

concept has now been expanded to denigrate the indiscriminate pursuit of sensory pleasure.³³ Socrates goes so far as to suggest at *Republic* 3 that, genealogically, aristocratic decadence gives rise to the licentiousness of democracy. Whereas the Kallipolis had begun from Glaucon's demand to preserve conventional forms of leisure that were absent from an agrarian life of necessity (*Rep.* 372d5-e2), he is now willing to expel from the ideal culture the musical tunings, rhythms, and instruments and the diet of symposia, including a variety of Sicilian dishes (Σικελικὴν ποικιλίαν ὄψου, 404d2), on the grounds that *poikilia* in cuisine produces bodily sickness, in music, licentiousness (ἀκολασίαν ἢ ποικιλία ἐνέτικτεν, ἐνταῦθα δὲ νόσον, 404e3-4). All of which implies that when Socrates specifies simplicity (ἡ ἀπλότης) instead as the standard of beauty by which to regulate cultural images, he rejects an historically specific sensibility which makes democratic *and* aristocratic ways of living seem attractive. So it is, too, that the relevant notion of simplicity carries specific resonances of austerity and masculinity to which the spirited Glaucon is attached (*cf.* 404b5-c6). These attachments are the material from which Glaucon can revalue *poikilia* as emasculate pleasures, no longer as tokens of a beautiful life.³⁴ An essential part of this strategy is to exploit the connection of *poikilia* to dangerous sensory pleasure so as to sever its connection to beauty.

³³ Perhaps Plato also suspects that, although the aristocratic *poikilon ēthos* is ideologically at odds with its democratic equivalent in Odysseus, democrats appropriated the note of camaraderie in the aristocratic ideal while elevating *everyone* to the aristocratic status of *agathoi* and *philoï*, a case of the 'democratic pillaging' to which Seager referred.

³⁴ The ideal of simplicity becomes expanded, of course, partly to reform this exclusively masculine conception of courage (*andreia*) and a heroic conception of spirit (*thumos*), discussed in Chapter 3. But as we also saw there, at this point Socrates must ring a bell that Glaucon can hear.

I register that the content and force of the opposition between ‘complexity’ and ‘simplicity’ depend on concrete cultural practices to point us in the right direction of the claim that ‘complex and various’ (ποικίλους... παντοδαπάς) rhythms and tunings, played on multi-stringed and poly-harmonic instruments, create disunity in the soul (*Rep.* 399e10-11).³⁵ But it should be clear from the special concern with pipers (*aulētai*) and the pipe (*aulos*), a wind instrument, as the most ‘many-stringed’ (πολυχορδότατον, 399d) of instruments that the criticism is not solely about and does not primarily depend on the material properties of instruments and their music. More to the point, to identify a music or an instrument as complex or simple is *not* to make a pallid observation, still less a neutral metaphysical description. It is to issue a *contention* intimately bound up with *who* is performing, in what way, to whom, where and why. After all, pipes and pipers – and their characteristic complexity – were the calling cards of the specifically ‘democratic’ musical practice now called New Music, though it was never so called in antiquity. ‘Democratic,’ at least in its ideologically-inflected reception, because it was performed in large theatres before mass audiences by upwardly mobile musical stars who could now earn a living by pleasing them, and because its definitive characteristics and effects were associated, often negatively by critics such as Plato, with the rise of democracy. Its practitioners – notably Melanippides, Telestes, Timotheus and tragedians Euripides and Agathon – were joined less in a unified movement than in competition to display their virtuosity. Their touchstones were innovation and, related, a number of musical effects brought under the head of *poikilia*. They increased the range and versatility of their instruments, for example by adding

³⁵ Recall *Rep.* 411a-c, with Chapter 2, §3 and Chapter 3, §3, for the psychological effect of these tunings, particularly on spirit. *Rep.* 557c1-4 and 559d7-8 collocate non-musical senses of ποικίλος and παντοδαπός.

strings to the *kithara*, and developed new ways of playing them. They experimented with new melodic tunings, mixed tunings, counterpoint, ornamentation, and free verse. Melodic lines broke with traditional rules of rhythmic and harmonic consistency, symmetry, and correspondence of music to spoken language. Verses used circuitous, imagistic and mimetic language; their syntax followed the sustained tones, volubility, and modulations of the pipes. The effect was to invert the traditional hierarchy of *logos* over music, sense over sound, which Socrates wishes to uphold (*Rep.* 398d).

To practitioners these innovations were a freeing up of a musical practice, and their own emphasis on novelty, multiplicity (especially of strings), variety and variability (*poikilia*) were taken, if not designed, to imply a freeing up of politics in the direction of revolution, inclusivity, and pluralism. Critics certainly objected to the music for this political reason, decrying such consequences not as liberation but as anarchy and lack of self-control.³⁶ Not all were as subtle as Plato, however, in thinking that musical innovation especially influences cultural norms, since ethical qualities of music insinuate themselves most deeply into the soul (*Rep.* 424bc, 401d) or, for much the same reason, that perceptions of the quality of music are informed by ethical, social, and political categories. This is to say that Plato does not object to musical complexity as a *metaphor* for democracy, to grind a political axe, but because he has a sophisticated social psychology which connects musical and political structures. Nevertheless, it does presume significantly against a music which favours sensory stimulation and emotional upheaval over self-control. If this seems unobjectionable in the immediate context of early education, we should

³⁶ Ideological reception: Csapo (2004): 227-29. As Leven (2014): 101-3 argues, however, the musicians plausibly helped to politicize the music through their own language of *poikilia*. On the *aulos* as material cause of New Music and focus of cultural anxieties: Wilson (1999), Martin (2003), and Csapo (2004).

not forget that Socrates is tapping into and taking sides in an anxious debate over the power of musicians to titillate the senses and inspire erotic frenzy. There is a general aesthetic and ethical problem to negotiate here, which will emerge more clearly momentarily, whether and how to engage in intense, seductive, yet potentially harmful modes of experience. The concept of *poikilia* lies at the heart of this problem; one of its emblems is the *aulos*.

So it is quite pointed when Socrates expels the instrument from the city, relegating to shepherds in the country a version of its pastoral cousin, the syrinx or panpipe.³⁷ And his justification is more loaded than it first seems: “We’re doing nothing new (οὐδέν καινόν) in preferring Apollo and his instruments to Marsyas and his” (*Rep.* 399de). Not only is Socrates arguably inventing a tradition of musical simplicity. By claiming *not* to be doing anything *new*, Socrates denies and inverts the positive evaluation of novelty which the musicians and their fans assert.³⁸ But I am more interested in the reference to the mythic contest between Apollo and Marsyas. This is firstly because the contest encapsulates the strategy by which Socrates dismisses New Music and its valorization of *poikilia*. Whether the satyr Marsyas hubristically claimed his pipe-playing superior to Apollo’s skill on the lyre or, in another version, whether Apollo challenged Marsyas out of jealousy and Marsyas hubristically *accepted*, the contest is set up to favour Apollo.³⁹ Not so much because he is a god, but because it is judged on his terms. After

³⁷ Shorey suggests *ad loc.* that the sigmas and iotas in the phrase ‘καὶ αὖ κατ’ ἀγροῦς τοῖς νομεῦσι σὺριγγ’ ἄν τις εἴη’ (*Rep.* 399d) might imitate the whistling of the syrinx. If so, Plato performs in his own writing the mimetic qualities for which the *aulos* was famed and for which he is rejecting it!

³⁸ See D’Angour (2011): 52-56 for further discussion of this rhetorical strategy.

³⁹ The most extensive versions of the myth are Hyg. *Fab.* 165, Ps.-Apoll. *Lib.* 1.4.2, Diod. 3.59.1-6, and Ovid. *Met.* 6.382 ff. There are several shorter allusions: e.g., Paus. 2.22.9, Hdt. 7.26, Plin. *Nat. Hist.* 16.89. My

allegedly losing the first round, Apollo defeats Marsyas by playing with his strings turned upside-down. Marsyas cannot do this with his pipes – but then again, why should he? And why, in a contest lost by failing to do what your opponent did, does Apollo get to go first? More telling, though at the risk of anachronism, is the version (Diod. 3.59) which has Apollo defeat Marsyas by singing in harmony with his lyre. This tricky move presupposes, as Socrates does, that the limitation of one's own voice counts against *musicality*. It is, of course, hardly satisfactory, for Apollo to claim that he is on fair ground because Marsyas does something like, but something worse, than singing when he breaths into his reeds. The very fact that the contest should require not just playing instruments but *arguing about* playing instruments presumes the terms of an Apollonian art. In addition to his instruments, then, Socrates takes over from Apollo the strategy which delegitimizes the only voice that matters to the pipers, the sound of their instrument. In fact, he does let even *that* be heard. This strategy corresponds to the wider aim and rhetorical route by which Socrates seeks to displace the aesthetics of *poikilia*, whose conceptions of beauty and excellence place less accent on norms of psychological stability and unity.

This is not to suggest that Plato does not understand the appeal of *poikilia*, only that he wants to correct for an unbridled and thus harmful attention toward it. The point is worth stressing. It is needed, I propose, to make sense of how the concept names both the danger and the fascinating allure that Socrates himself espies in mimetic poetry at *Republic* 10. Whereas the first of these elements has been well established, the latter is often ignored. So it shall not be necessary to reconstruct the argument that mimetic poetry captures or aims at appearances as

reading of this passage owes to discussions with Lydia Goehr, who pursues a similar reading in Goehr (2017).

they appear (πρὸς τὸ φαινόμενον, ὡς φαίνεται, *Rep.* 598b) and that, unless one knows its nature, it corrupts the soul by leading its non-rational elements to accept false values which organize the dramatic action (603a-605c). Yet it is important to note, as a preliminary to its deeper ambivalence, that although the ‘greatest charge’ is that mimetic poetry provokes decent people to grieve sympathetically for non-virtuous characters (605c6-606d8), the argument as a whole is slanted toward the psychological response of the many. At certain points, their response partly constitutes mimetic poetry as a genre: the mimetic poet is identified as one who presents what appears beautiful to an ignorant crowd (φαίνεται καλόν, 602b3), at least if he wants a good reputation (605a3-4). Socrates is primarily concerned, then, with mimetic poetry reinforcing false values, extending his concerns in *Rep.* 2-3 over the false values it instills. This point underscores, what does not seem sufficiently observed, that what *appears* beautiful in this context is a matter of how value shows up *to someone* on account of her cultural upbringing. As the current criticisms of poetry, unlike those of Book 3, address poetic performance and reception in democratic Athenian culture, it should not be surprising to find delight in *poikilia*, as a criterion of what appears beautiful, among its central targets.

The terminology of musical colors remarked earlier paves the way for the key claim that mimetic poetry exacts its harm through the trope of “the excitable and multicolored character” (τὸ ἀγανακτητικόν τε καὶ ποικίλον ἦθος, *Rep.* 605a5-6). The difficulty of assessing the senses of *poikilos* in this claim, and their role in the argument, stems from how the concept brings together quite specific and more general levels of analysis. On the one hand, Socrates characterizes tragic heroes generically and pejoratively. The term ἀγανακτητικόν describes a non-rational psychological element said to dominate tragic heroes and the audiences to whom they appear

beautiful. This is the element that relishes giving in to grieve in misfortune rather than calmly measure suffering against the larger course of life. It admits, we are told, of much *poikilos* mimesis, πολλήν μίμησιν καὶ ποικίλην ἔχει (604e1).⁴⁰ The accusative phrase is not obvious, making the sense of *poikilos* at 605a somewhat opaque. It is indiscriminate between (1) many different sorts of presentation and (2) many varied or intricate presentations.⁴¹ We can be sure, however, that 604e-605a draws on connotations of sensory pleasure, deception, and psychological fragmentation which have accrued to the concept of *poikilia*. The closest parallel is to the ‘drones’ in *Republic* 8 who cleverly peddle unnecessary “manifold and intricate pleasures” (παντοδαπὰς ἡδονὰς καὶ ποικίλας, 559d7-8), although the term has since been extended to the manifold and contradictory pulls of the appetites, a “diverse and many-headed beast” (θηρίου ποικίλου καὶ πολυκεφάλου, 588c7-8).

This extended use of the term suggests that Socrates lays onto tragic heroes a psychological pattern in which spirit is debased and appetites rule, a suggestion strengthened by his description of the audience as not just a motley crew of people but a crew of motley people (πανηγύρει καὶ παντοδαποῖς ἀνθρώποις, *Rep.* 604e5), psychologically manifold because they have been reared on an unhealthy diet of *poikilia*.⁴² Poets can then easily please audiences with

⁴⁰ The alternative defines the virtuous person, whose stability approximates the beautiful condition of immutable gods who, unlike traditional Greek gods, do not cunningly shapeshift (*Rep.* 380d1-381c9).

⁴¹ Translations reflect uncertainty among the first two options: (1): ‘a great variety of materials for imitation’ (Jowett), ‘many and varied occasions for imitation’ (Shorey); (2) ‘much and varied imitation’ (Bloom), ‘many multicolored imitations’ (Grube, rev. Reeve). Griffith merges both: ‘highly susceptible to all sorts of varied imitation.’

⁴² Coordination of spirit and appetite: see Rubidge (1993) and cf. ἀγανακτητικός at *Rep.* 605a4, used of debased spirit at 411a-c, and shameless grief at 605d1-606b10, though τὸ... βέλτιστον... ἀνίστην τὴν φυλακὴν (606a7-b1) may imply, not reason relaxing spirit as its guard, but the soul relaxing its guard over

aggrieved and volatile characters, reinforcing their similar psychological makeup and values (605a2-b6). On the side of value, it is tempting to suppose that the reference to *poikilia* conveys the suggestion sometimes proffered in tragedy that human life and action are beset by irreconcilable conflicts of value or by ethical and metaphysical ambiguity. For such perspectives are precisely those which lead one to find the suffering of heroes pitiable and glorious, and to treat human affairs too seriously (604c1-2), rather than adopt the more synoptic point of view of reason.⁴³ Whether the concept conveys precisely this error, it clearly cautions against the dangerously fascinating and absorptive texture and content of tragic poetry. The strategy, as in the criticisms of democracy and New Music, is to drive a wedge between the sensuous pleasure and the apparent beauty of *poikilia*. For the sake of critique, Socrates all but reduces this appearance to an illusory means of deception. This enables him to align this experience more easily – though, I shall suggest, not entirely straightforwardly – with dangerous sensory pleasure *as opposed* to beauty. For such pleasure, we have by now been told, renders one psychologically fragmented, less a person ruled by reason than a phenomenon, apt indeed for theatrical spectacle.

We should bear in mind, on the other hand, that the phrase *poikilon ēthos* refers obliquely to a character a good deal more specific than one who is “stormy, passionate, emotional, full of

itself, as at 591a3-4. However, my argument is independent of whether, and if so how, the psychology at *Rep.* 10 differs from earlier analyses.

⁴³ Petraki (2011): 258-59 curiously takes Socrates to object that poetic *poikilia* gives ethical concepts a false sense of unity. For proper appreciation of the emphasis on disunity, see remarks on the ‘tragic worldview’ in Halliwell (2002): 98-117. His emphasis on the heterogeneity of imagination (94) seems less appropriate, however, to the present passage.

inner conflict.”⁴⁴ It names ethical ideals of adaptability, quick thinking and cunning epitomized by such heroes as Odysseus, Prometheus, and Medea. These specific resonances enable Socrates to impugn actual models of virtue, no less those which embody ideals of democratic citizenship, and to use suspicion of these characters in tragedy to cast them in still harsher and less attractive light. Socrates may then transfer suspicion, in the second place, onto the poets who create *poikiloi mimēseis*, a phrase that, whatever exactly it denotes, surely still connotes *tricky* or *subtle* craftsmanship.⁴⁵ How might we hear these connotations?

Talk of trickery keeps lockstep with an earlier comparison of poets and painters to magicians who create the appearance of anything (*Rep.* 598d4-5, 602d5: γοητείας... ἢ θαυματοποιία). The vocabulary of magic or wonder-working, germane to *poikilia*, works to strike a delicate balance between unmasking and mystifying the psychagogic power of mimetic poetry. On the one hand, we are being told that its trick is to play to our silliest part. As with any magic trick, learning how it is conjured divests it of its spell. Socrates marshals this point, of course, toward the conclusion that mimetic poets do not need knowledge or craft expertise. But note that he willingly concedes, on the other hand, that they *do* possess some quasi-divine skill or wisdom (ἡ σοφία, 605a3). The concession may seem surprising or inconsistent, but it is not at all out of

⁴⁴ So, Moss (2007): 435. Moss draws exceptional attention to the role of *poikilia* and its cultural application to heroes (435-37), though in my opinion unduly prioritizes in Plato’s use of the concept the ontological deficiency of multiplicity and, as the above quotation betrays, mental states of tragic protagonists as opposed to their actions and adaptability of character. Both emphases tend toward too abstract an interpretation of *poikilia*, as is needed, for example, to bring under its head “great literature” that is “complex and varied” (442). I have, however, benefited much from considering where I depart from Moss’s most thoughtful and clear analysis.

⁴⁵ Rosen (2005): 374 captures this nuance (‘much intricate imitation’) but does not pursue its full significance, claiming instead that mimetic poetry is diverse because grief can be expressed in many ways.

place. It calls to court and demotes the links in archaic poetry between *poikilia*, *sophia*, and beauty. By consigning mimetic poets to a realm of arational magic, Socrates can reverse their fascinating effects while continuing to insist that they nonetheless come from and produce ignorance and can therefore displace them, like the wondrous and intensely pleasing poet-rhapsode at *Rep.* 398e, from the center of civic life.

It might be objected that Socrates cannot express admiration for mimetic poetry. The whole point of casting it in terms of *poikilia*, we might think, is to emphasize its danger as a *mere* or an *illusory appearance* of beauty, namely appetitive pleasure. After all, an overarching contrast between appearance and being, begun at 596e, leads Socrates to diagnose what is wrong with tragic heroes and the many who admire them along the lines of someone misled by a straight stick which *looks* bent in water. Only from a shallow and distorted view does human life appear unbearable, faced with a choice between two evils, caught between conflicting values, irredeemably painful, or some such – not so, we are told, from the point of view of reason.⁴⁶ Thus, even if Plato does not in general presume a dichotomy between appearance and being, it is reasonable to think that we are encouraged in this particular context to connect appearance straightforwardly with ontological, epistemological, and ethical deficiencies – all via the concept of *poikilia*. So runs the standard interpretation.

As I have been arguing, however, we should see such encouragement as part of a more rhetorically edged and anxious attempt to militate against a dominant sensibility which treats *poikilia* as constitutive of beauty. In the passage at hand, the rhetorical edge and anxiety become

⁴⁶ For the parallel: *Rep.* 602c ~ 604c-605a. Nehamas (1982) famously puzzles over how the parallel could work. Ferrari (1989): 132-37 and Moss (2007) provide excellent reconstructions.

clear once we notice that Socrates uses the concept of *poikilia* to emphasize also *his own continued* fascination in mimetic poetry. We shall blunt the force of this ambivalence if we prejudge the apparent beauty of *poikilia* as *mere* appearance. We shall also occlude the conceptual and phenomenological difficulty of distinguishing meaningfully between the rapt (and potentially problematic) absorption of fascination and the salutary experience of (genuine) beauty. Or so I shall propose.

Socrates uses the concept of *poikilia* to highlight fascination and allure of what seems beautiful. Now, this would not complicate the situation were Socrates describing, with the dispassionate eye of a harsh critic, how mimetic poetry fascinates *only* an ignorant crowd. But here matters are more complex. Socrates highlights at various points *his own* continued attraction to mimetic poetry *despite* his awareness of its harm. As Stephen Halliwell has observed, the criticisms of mimetic poetry at *Republic* 10 are carefully framed by moments of ambivalence on Socrates' part which must complicate the received views that Plato is hostile to poetry or would banish the best poets of his day from an ideal culture.⁴⁷ Socrates admits at the outset that the love and reverence he has had for Homer since childhood prevent him from reporting the psychological danger of poetry (φιλία γέ τίς με καὶ αἰδῶς ἐκ παιδός). To revere Homer as the first teacher and leader of all the *fine* tragedians (τῶν καλῶν ἀπάντων τούτων τῶν τραγικῶν) may even suggest that this poetry is beautiful. Socrates thus feels compelled by an *impersonal need*, in conflict with these deeply personal feelings, to tell the truth about poetry, twice using the impersonal imperative 'One must say', ὁρτέον (*Rep.* 595b8, 595c3). These opening praises are

⁴⁷ See further Halliwell (2011): ch. 4.

bound to strike us as ironic.⁴⁸ But that sense should come to seem a tad quick and unsatisfactory when we find the same emotional coloring at the argument's close. There Socrates *invites* a defence which would show poetry beneficial in addition to pleasurable, either in meter from Poetry herself, personified as an alluring woman,⁴⁹ or failing that, in prose from lovers of poetry. Were such a defence made, he tells Glaucon, "we would gladly admit" (ἄσμενοι ἂν καταδεχοίμεθα) poetry into a well-governed constitution, be it a political or a psychological constitution (*Rep.* 607a-e).

It has not escaped several readers that Plato plausibly gestures to himself as a lover of poetry and to his own dialogues as the necessary prose defence. What I wish to emphasize, as does Halliwell, is that Socrates *desires* to listen to poetry, and he desires to listen *precisely because* he is intimately aware of its charm or enchantment (ὥς σύνισμέν γε ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς κηλουμένοις ὑπ' αὐτῆς, *Rep.* 607c). This explains the telling fact that Socrates concludes the discussion by suggesting *how* he and Glaucon and other philosophical lovers of poetry might continue to listen to poetry: they should sing an incantation *while* listening, repeating to themselves that poetry is not a serious thing which conveys truth but still does psychic harm (*Rep.* 608ab).⁵⁰ Notice that it is simply assumed that they *will* continue to listen to mimetic poetry, whether or not a successful defence is in the end forthcoming. The reason is not simply or primarily that philosophers will be exposed to poetry in the actual world, but that Socrates feels, now in terms more intense than

⁴⁸ So, Adam (1902) n. *ad.* 595c, as for πρῶτον τῶν τραγῳδοποιῶν at 607a and τῶν καλῶν πολιτειῶν at 607e. There may be irony in these lines, but an appeal to irony cannot tell a complete story.

⁴⁹ Cf. *Rep.* 603b: poetry cast in role of courtesan or *hetaira*.

⁵⁰ *Phd.* 77e3-9 offers a partial parallel, an incantation to rid a non-rational fear of death.

before, an abiding if childish erotic passion for poetry. He compares himself and Glaucon to lovers who must through *force* (βία) stay away from seemingly harmful partners (608a). The need for force, like the need for an incantation, reinforce that attraction mingles with rejection in one ambivalent attitude (608a).

It is quite true that Socrates repudiates his love as childish, akin to his abiding childhood love and reverence for Homer. But this reinforces the two lessons I wish to draw from his psychology. First, it is plausible that language of *poikilia* at *Rep.* 10 conveys not only caution but also admiration and attraction, however faint. (How odd to think Socrates could feel or express erotic desire while thinking something ‘merely seems’ beautiful!) Few concepts are indeed so apt to trace both sides of this complex evaluative response. The same tension, we saw, surrounded *poikilia* in archaic sources, only Socrates has in effect reversed the measures of admiration and anxiety. Moreover, and irrespective of the specific shading of *poikilos* at 604e-605a, we should locate in this ambivalence a *problem* of “whether, and in what sense, it might still be possible to be a philosophical lover of poetry” (Halliwell (2011): 183). My proposal is that this specific problem takes its bearing from a wider problem under the sign of *poikilia* of whether or how to engage in fascinating yet potentially harmful modes of experience. We gloss over this problem and the ambivalence at its core if we imagine Socrates sanguinely thinking that mimetic poetry ‘merely seems’ beautiful.

There is a second and more fundamental issue. The trouble with asking primarily whether something variegated (*poikilos*) is beautiful or whether it (merely) seems beautiful is that this is an ontological or extensional question posed from a third-personal perspective. What is needed is a phenomenological or experiential perspective. This is ultimately because beauty and *poikilia*

are inseparable from the terms of appearance – relations between poles of subject and object, indeed affective relations involving erotic desire, admiration, wonder, fascination or charm. Only from the side of experience is there a genuine problem whether to reject attractions that one perceives as dangerous or else how to relate to such attractions. Yet it remains difficult to understand, as a conceptual point and as a matter of phenomenology, how one could ever meaningfully distinguish between being *fascinated* by that which *seems* but is *not* beautiful and being *attracted* to what seems and *is* beautiful. The difficulty is not simply how one may distinguish from inside of experience, so to speak, something's being as opposed to 'merely' seeming beautiful. This is an important part of the problem, to be sure, which explain the chief importance of acquiring at the very start of education the perceptual, cultural, and ethical resources to make such discriminations. Yet there is another half of the problem, which the concept of *poikilia* emphasizes. It is not clear how one is to distinguish the fascinating but potentially harmful experience of *poikilia* from the similar or identical effects of beauty.⁵¹

Notice to this end how seamlessly Socrates elsewhere associates beautiful speech with fascinating complexity. Funeral orators, he states, praise the war dead "so beautifully (οὕτως καλῶς) that they enchant (γοητεύουσιν) our souls, embellishing somehow in most beautiful words (κάλλιστά πως τοῖς ὀνόμασι ποικίλλοντες) praise each man deserves and praise he does not" (*Menex.* 234c5-235a3). Socrates is so fascinated or charmed (κηλούμενος) that for the next

⁵¹ Hence the epigraph to this chapter, whose following couplet registers something of the uneasy 'line between love and fascination' that Socrates suggests he and other philosophical lovers of poetry must straddle: "Oh, her lips are much too close to mine, beware my foolish heart / But should our eager lips combine, then let the fire start."

three days he feels greater, nobler, and more beautiful (235b1-2).⁵² If we take Socrates at his word, whether he now finds the oration manipulative, overwrought or what not, he finds it beautiful while in its fascinating grips. If we, like Menexenus, suppose Socrates jests, it remains that the experience and vocabulary of fascination walk arm in conceptual arm with both *poikilia* and beauty and so it is difficult, and needs some rhetorical sleight, to disentangle these concepts as Plato wants. Rather than ask after an unqualified verdict whether Socrates judges variegated art to be beautiful, we might consider whether his strategy to connect the concept of *poikilia* to fascination or charm but to oppose it to beauty lays bare these conceptual and psychological difficulties.

If these last remarks complicate the relation of Plato to the bewitching texture of poetry, they also reinforce his point that beauty is not identifiable with *poikilia*. This is because the critique, however ambivalent, assumes one should avoid the psychological instability which delight in *poikilia* is thought to promote. It threatens, more specifically, a normative conception of human agency as motivated and unified by reason. One can of course object to this line of thinking by arguing that a life rich in diverse pursuits like the democratic individual's is more fulfilling than one organized around a single task, or that restrained calm rather than 'multicolored' emotionality does not disclose – indeed fails to disclose – what really is valuable. Such criticisms rightly bristle at the *degree* of psychological unity which Plato thinks human beings can and should aim to achieve. One might even object to a weaker and more compelling view lying in the background, the normative condition that human action is intelligible only if

⁵² The praise of Agathon's encomium at *Symp.* 198a4-c5 furnishes an instructive parallel, on which see Chapter 5, §4 below.

one has some conception of a life as a whole. Here too are difficult questions how strong the constraints on unity should be and, at the limit, whether any structural ideal of unity might not presume too harmonious, too coherent, or too *safe* a picture of our psychological lives. I mention these potential lines of criticism simply to reiterate that Plato presents but one side of the issues between him and the aestheticians of *poikilia*, whose conceptions of beauty, virtue and skill or wisdom do not place such accent on unity and stability. That he does so to *contest* these conceptions goes a long way toward explaining why he tends in the *Republic* to connect the concept of *poikilia* to the exaggerated extremes of multiplicity or instability. His aim is to redirect admiration toward the beauty of a virtuous person and a non-sensible ontological order of ‘forms,’ the Beautiful Itself.

Yet this reorientation is not unproblematic either, precisely because it must proceed by way of sensory beauty. I shall return to this point in §5, to emphasize the ambivalence that pervades the heuristic potential of admiring the beautiful yet sensible complexity of the heavens, returning better apprised to the passages from which this chapter began. It shall help first to attend, however, to the metaphysical and epistemological dimension of Plato’s project to displace the aesthetics of *poikilia* by what he considers a more nourishing orientation toward beauty.

§4 *Lovers of Sights and Sounds*

Rep. 475d-480a provides a famously dense argument that a ‘lover of sights and sounds’, who loves many sensibly beautiful things (τὰ πολλὰ καλὰ) but does not countenance the Beautiful itself, has belief (δόξα), not knowledge. Because sensible beauty seems beautiful at some time, to someone, in some respect, or relative to some things, and so can admit of seeming not-beautiful,

a lover of sights and sounds fails to direct her thought to the proper object of knowledge, what *is* completely or purely (τὸ παντελῶς ὄν, *Rep.* 477a3; τοῦ εἰλικρινῶς ὄντος: 477a6, 478d4-5, 479d5).⁵³ While several fertile debates continue to clarify the epistemological and ontological distinctions which organize this passage, little attention has been paid to the aesthetic and ethical considerations which frame it. Complementing the more familiar approach, I would like to show that the passage tacitly works to undermine the pattern of attention promoted by the aesthetics of *poikilia*. By demarcating the philosopher from the lover of sights and sounds, Socrates subordinates a focus on a multiplicity of sensible appearances to a distinctly philosophical engagement with beauty, oriented rather toward a non-sensible unity which underlies those appearances. It is as part of this wider strategy that we must interpret the epistemic limits and value of cosmic *poikilia* from which we began.

Who are the lovers of sights and sounds? A good place to begin is, in fact, at the end. Socrates claims by way of summary that lovers of sights and sounds cannot grasp that being which remains always the same and ‘wander’ (πλανώμενοι) among what varies every which way (*Rep.* 484b6-7). Intriguingly, because the lover of sights and sounds, unlike the philosopher, does not grasp a single and stable form of beauty, she *herself wanders*. She mirrors the instability of what she loves. Because belief is structured toward changeable sensible items, it too is changeable, to the point that fixation on the sensible causes an unstable character (508d). That a lover of sights and sounds should have not simply opinions but, more strongly, many *norms* or

⁵³ All four ontological deficiencies may be operative in the argument, but the temporal condition is forefront. The pivotal question is whether a sensible beauty *will* appear somehow ugly (φανήσεται, *Rep.* 479a8). Future tense is needed because a lover could easily grant that her beloved’s beauty will fade but is unlikely to admit that it currently seems ugly. Socrates knows this: he precludes the argument by citing how lovers obstinately perceive any potential facial defect as endearing (474d2-475a3).

standards of beauty which roll around (τὰ τῶν πολλῶν πολλὰ νόμιμα καλοῦ... κυλινδεῖται, 479d3-4) or wander (πλανητόν, 479d8) indeterminately between knowledge and ignorance affords a clue as to why this might be.⁵⁴ For if one's norms of character and conduct are so unmoored, one becomes vulnerable to thinking in the direction of the democratic individual or the tyrant that anything is no more beautiful than ugly, good than bad, or just than unjust (538d7-e3). In other words, Socrates anticipates a descent into a shameless pursuit of pleasure, itself later characterized in terms of *poikilia*, if one does not anchor one's attention in ontological items as unitary and stable as the form of beauty. Such an anchor, of course, the aesthetics of *poikilia* outright rejects.

While the exchange admittedly does not explicitly invoke the concept of *poikilia*, it centrally concerns how not to respond to manifestations of *beauty* – goodness and justice and other properties are treated secondarily – and so we have grounds to consider whether the culturally prominent sensibility maligned elsewhere in the dialogue is an implicit target here as well. Some confirmation of this possibility derives from the fact that the lovers of sights and sounds do not merely fixate on the sensible world, as most everyone does, but actively *resist* the idea of a single item or explanation that unites the many beloved beauties (οὐδαμῇ ἀνεχόμενος ἄν τις ἐν τὸ καλὸν φῆ εἶναι, *Rep.* 479a). This is likely not to reject an incorporeal Platonic form – a lover of sights and sounds would not understand appeals to unity that way – but to reject some or any view on which beauty *is* any *one* thing.⁵⁵ Lovers of sights and sounds seem positively

⁵⁴ Compare τὰ νόμιμα at *Rep.* 484d1.

⁵⁵ See *Rep.* 476e for the suggestion that lovers of sights and sounds must understand the discussion at some level, though as Benitez (1996): 523-55 argues, they need not accept premises as Socrates understands them.

trained on the plurality and variety of sensible beauty, attracted to it insofar as it “appears to be many... manifesting itself everywhere” (πανταχοῦ φανταζόμενα πολλὰ φαίνεσθαι, 476a6-7), variously, and indeed on its sensuous or elemental quality: “beautiful sounds, colors, shapes, and everything fashioned out of them” (τάς τε καλὰς φωνὰς ἀσπάζονται καὶ χροῖας καὶ σχήματα καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐκ τῶν τοιούτων δημιουργούμενα, 476b4-6).⁵⁶ Their attention, it seems, is structured around material constituents of experience, like those enraptured by the wondrous movement and shimmer of Odysseus’ golden brooch. None of this goes to show that one of the lovers of sights and sounds’ standards of beauty is *poikilia*, for the text does not admit such detail, but it does suggest that their aesthetic sensibility is quite congruous with the sensibility organized by this standard.

The aesthetic and cultural background we have traced sheds helpful light on why Plato wants and needs to demarcate lovers of sights and sounds from philosophers along the lines of their competing orientations to beauty. Recall the suggestive way these lovers are introduced. Glaucon remarks that, were philosophy simply a matter of loving all kinds of learning, then “many strange people” would be admitted to its ranks: for lovers of spectacles (οἱ φιλοθεάμονες) seem to enjoy learning (ἔμοιγε δοκοῦσι τῷ καταμανθάνειν χαίροντες), as do lovers of sounds (οἱ φιλήκοοι), although they prefer to attend every Dionysian festival “as though their ears were hired out to listen to every chorus” than a discussion or some similar study (*Rep.* 475d1-9). Far from mistaking these groups or the craft aficionados added moments later (475e1, 476a9-b1) for philosophers, Glaucon perceives all too great a difference between them. He disparages ‘lovers

⁵⁶ Given the reference later to standards of beauty, however, it cannot be that these people are “absorbed in the concrete and cannot apprehend any general aspect of things” (Shorey (1939): *ad. loc.*)

of sounds,’ which usually denotes participants in intellectual culture, as ruled by their ears and literally wandering among festivals, perhaps suggesting that art-critical discussion pertains more to noise than proper speech (λόγος, 475d5) when compared to philosophical argument.⁵⁷ Yet Plato will not let us separate aesthetic and philosophical engagement as clinically as Glaucon does or as some commentators incline us to do by labeling the lovers of sights and sounds ‘aesthetes’, often derogatorily.⁵⁸ Plato has Socrates immediately remind Glaucon that these lovers are nonetheless *like* philosophers (ἀλλ’ ὁμοίους μὲν φιλοσόφοις, 475e2-3), just as, interestingly, he must remind Glaucon that those supposedly “strange” (ἀτόπους) prisoners in the allegory of the cave are “like us” (ὁμοίους ἡμῖν, 515a4-5). Or in any case like himself: the very first sentence of the dialogue recounts how Socrates went down to the Piraeus to witness (θεάσασθαι) how that new, inaugural festival of Bendis would be put on and how beautiful he found the procession and Thracian contingent (327a). In what does their similarity consist?

The similarity is twofold. First, lovers of sights, sounds, and crafts all enjoy learning, even if they go about it in a deficient way. The reference to theatrical festivals suggests the chief reason why. Athenian theatre was a self-conscious site of reflection, deliberation, and judgment on ethical and civic affairs. As such, it is reasonable not to restrict their interest in learning to compositional techniques of good art – techniques, recall, that centrally include *poikilia* – but to

⁵⁷ LSJ s.v. φιλήκοος, with *Rep.* 535d5 and 548e5.

⁵⁸ So, e.g., Sedley (2007): 257-59 and Rosen (2013): 89-90, though the latter is nuanced on the whole. Vogt (2012): 66 n35 speaks for the many who assume an aesthetic and non-ethical construal of the (sensible) *kalon* here, even though it is collocated with the just and the good, as elsewhere, e.g., *Rep.* 493c1-2, 506a5-6, 520c6, 538e2-3.

consider them engaged to some extent with questions about how to live.⁵⁹ This need not mean that they attend plays to figure these questions out, pondering (say) whether Antigone really is heroic. But particularly in view of *Republic* 10, we should be sensitive in this context to the ethical images and ideals one imbibes, according to Plato, by taking pleasure in beautiful portrayals of heroes, their deeds, and their sufferings. Further in this general direction, we should note that Plato uses the phrase ‘many beautiful things’ (πολλὰ καὶ καλά) elsewhere to refer, on the one hand, to the most important matters (τὰ μέγιστα), insights into human life and the divine (*Ap.* 22b-d), and, on the other hand, the radiant display of virtuous deeds (*Symp.* 209e2). Although this phrase comes rather late, and rather ambiguously, in our present passage, this partial parallel encourages us to picture the lovers of sights and sounds engaged with matters of how to live rather than limited to a *narrowly* aesthetic appreciation of the sort we might suspect of some Manhattan socialites or, just across the East River, ironic hipsters. A more capacious and integrated approach to the *kalon* gives sense to the claim that lovers of sights and sounds love learning, *like* the philosopher, but also why it is therefore crucial to distinguish them. *Unlike* the philosopher, this group is mistaken that such insights may be gleaned from theatre; that they are best and only acquired through the senses; and, we may suppose, that knowledge can consist in a collection, not a unified body, of ideas and examples about beauty, justice, goodness, and so forth.

This leads onto the second point of comparison. Like lovers of sights and sounds, the philosopher desires beauty. If from one angle this suggests we ethicize the lovers of sights and

⁵⁹ For the former restriction, Gosling (1960): 121-22, though his (1977): 309-11 may allow the latter, more capacious view. Meinwald (2017) pursues a refreshing discussion along these lines, an earlier version of which was kindly made available to me.

sounds, from another angle it suggests we aestheticize the philosopher. There is, of course, a limit to how far one can stretch the sensuous dimension of this last idea, a limit marked by the fact that the philosopher is *primarily* oriented to beauty as grasped intellectually rather than solely perceptually. This does not mean that she disregards what lovers of sights and sounds and, crucially, those who valorize *poikilia* devote attention to. Rather, the philosopher engages differently with the sensuousness, multiplicity, and variety of beauty. Her gaze is ‘enlarged’ beyond these, seeking a single principle which explains the various sensory appearances of beauty. This is a different way of looking at the same objects. The result is that the philosopher comes to descry or to observe sharply (καθορᾶν, *Rep.* 476d) many beautiful things *as* participants in the Beautiful itself, not unlike how a Bach aficionado might hear a musical phrase *as* a theme, and more richly, as it returns in several variations. Infused with understanding, Plato is suggesting, perception becomes *refined* or *clarified* from being muddled and obscure, as it must be if focused on what is sensuous or variegated. The point to emphasize is that if the philosopher characteristically enjoys the same aesthetic habit of delighting in beautiful sights and sounds, only reconfiguring this habit, the aesthetics of *poikilia* coopts the very powers of attention and attraction that a philosophical pursuit of beauty requires – hence the need to contest this organization of sensibility.

It is in the wider context of this project of aesthetic reconfiguration that we should approach the discussion of astronomy from which we began. The criticism of contemporary astronomy continues the above pattern of thought. Yet now the concept of *poikilia* comes to the fore and into a complicated role. Socrates rebukes Glaucon for admitting observational astronomy into their course of ‘higher studies’ (τὴν περὶ τὰ ἄνω μάθησιν) that, in the

topography of the cave, compel the soul to look ‘up’ a true being. Glaucon has taken the metaphor too literally, Socrates complains, as though he would count someone as using their thought “if he should learn something by looking with his head thrown back at decorations on the ceiling” (εἴ τις ἐν ὀροφῇ ποικίλματα θεώμενος ἀνακύπτων καταμανθάνοι τι, *Rep.* 529ab). The term *poikilmata* captures the superficiality of visible heavenly motions – “embroidered,” as it were, on the visible surface of the heaven (ἐπείπερ ἐν ὀρατῷ πεποικίλται, 529c8-9) – as well as the variant speed and direction of their orbits. The charge is that contemporary astronomers focus on the multiplicity and mutability of the sensible realm, in this respect like the lovers of sights and sounds, while unaware of or uninterested in a more fundamental reality beyond. Because the observed motions of fixed stars, sun, moon, and the known planets (‘wanderers’) vary in speed, position, and direction relative to one another, they fall short of the *true* motions of heavenly bodies, knowledge of which requires abstract geometry, as the *Timaeus* expounds. Setting aside how exactly that account bears on the *Republic*, it is useful to notice that while Timaeus, the kind of astronomer whom Socrates advocates, similarly restricts the epistemic competency of the senses, he also offers fascinated and exuberant praise for the “wondrously elaborated” (πεποικιλμένος δὲ θαυμαστῶς, *Tim.* 39d2) arrangement of the heavens. His highest praise is reserved for those brightest and most beautiful fixed stars which, he claims, embellish the night sky as a veritable adornment (*kosmos*) of the cosmos itself (κόσμον ἀληθινὸν... πεποικιλμένον, 40a3-9).

We began by noticing that the vocabulary of *poikilia* at *Rep.* 529c-530a involves similar praise. We can now appreciate that when Socrates compares those “most beautiful (κάλλιστα) and most exact (ἀκριβέστατα)” visible motions of heavenly bodies to none other than Daedalus’

plans for elaborate and magically self-moving statues, he draws on a long and multifaceted history of the concept of the *poikilia* and expresses some degree of admiration and wonder at the phenomena it picks out, including the dazzling night sky.⁶⁰ Such beauty and exactitude can point the way to these truths, if one's vision is unclouded and well informed. Recall, just as someone experienced (τις ἔμπειρος), not necessarily expert, in geometry can see in such beautifully executed plans (ιδὼν τὰ τοιαῦτα, κάλλιστα μὲν ἔχειν ἀπεργασία) the work of supremely skillful craftsman, so too a 'real astronomer,' like Timaeus, observing the motions of the stars would be moved to believe that "the craftsman of the heaven fashioned it and all in it in the most beautiful way possible for such things" (τε κάλλιστα τὰ τοιαῦτα ἔργα συστήσασθαι, οὕτω συνεστάναι τῷ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ δημιουργῷ αὐτόν τε καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ). This is why one can and must use these 'decorations' of the visible cosmos as models (ποικιλία παραδείγμασι χρηστέον) by which to study intelligible astronomical patterns (529d-530a).

We can now understand how these attributions of beauty and epistemic value to *poikilia* are compatible with and in fact complementary to the usual abuse of this concept in the *Republic*. Such abuse aims specifically to undermine *poikilia* as a criterion of beauty. Put positively, Plato wants to remove *poikilia* from the concept of beauty in order to redirect admiration toward a unitary and non-sensible mode of being in which, he supposes, the nature of beauty resides. If the concern is solely to sever an analytic connection between *poikilia* and beauty, as I have argued an historically and textually sensitive reading requires, Plato may consistently accept that sensuous variegation may be beautiful or that its fascinating effects may sometimes stimulate

⁶⁰ *Phd.* 110b5-d7 provides for another Platonic echo of this trope. For archaic attributions of *poikilia* to the starry sky, see e.g., Aesch. *Prom.* 24, Eur. *Ion* 1141ff., *Hel.* 109; to the natural world in general: e.g., Sapph. fr. 46(a), Pi. *I.4.8*, Emp. DK B23 in Simp. *Phys.* 159.27: ποικίλλωσιν... εὖ δεδαῶτε τέχνης ὑπὸ μήτιος.

epistemic and ethical progress. Such a salutary role would indeed serve Plato's philosophical aesthetics. To that extent, one reason to displace the aesthetics of *poikilia* is to put *poikilia* in its proper place.

§5 *The Possibility of Wonder*

Why not conclude, perhaps more simply, that Plato distinguishes a salutary species from a harmful species of *poikilia*? This is the proposal of Mauro Tulli, who to my knowledge has provided the most balanced account of Plato's treatment of the concept. Tulli makes central not the complexity of the cosmos but suggestions in the *Laws* (2. 665c) and the *Menexenus* (234c-235c, partially quoted above) that the pleasure of variegated speech or song is instrumental to education, if supervised by knowledge. He duly notes that the position he ascribes to Plato marks a break with the archaic tradition, not least in critiquing poetry in the *Republic*.⁶¹ While there is much to recommend in Tulli's sensitive and economical approach, the notion that Plato divides the concept of *poikilia* into positive and negative sides seems to me to evade the depth of the problem which Plato confronts in it. I have suggested that its element of danger gives rise to a problem of whether and how to negotiate seductive yet potentially harmful modes of experience. The salient point is not, what is true, that its positive potential does not cancel its threat. If admiring the visible heavens can point some well-reared souls toward its intelligible order, this experience, the *Republic* emphasizes, can also entrench one further in sensory phenomena and

⁶¹ Tulli (2009): 235 summarizes: "Platone pratica la *Spaltung* di matrice arcaica, divide. La *poikilia* negative della produzione poetica non è certo la *poikilia* positive che traspare nel *Menesseno*, che nel II libro delle *Leggi* è conciliabile con la ricerca." See also *Phdr.* 277c: *poikilos* speech is needed to persuade *poikilos* souls.

pleasure. The dazzling complexity of the heavens, being intelligently arranged yet sensible, turns Janus-faced to both of sides of this ambivalence. But the deeper reason we cannot distinguish positive and negative species of *poikilia* as Tulli suggests is not ontological but conceptual. We must approach the concept of *poikilia* from the side of the *experience* of someone *fascinated* by beautiful appearance and that, from this side, a neat distinction between beneficial and harmful kinds of fascination is unavailable. The experience is too overwhelming for this distinction to hold sway, though of course it can be made out on reflection before or after. And the experience is too attractive not to seem quite similar or identical to the (supposedly beneficial) experience of beauty. Even *if* one can remain alert to the dangers of some fascination while absorbed in its grip, as Socrates hopes to do with his incantation about the nature of mimetic poetry, we would grossly minimize the psychological attraction that this involves were we to assume that one therefore perceives this fascination to be entirely harmful. Unless we preserve rather than dissolve this fundamentally ambivalent phenomenology, we shall obscure how the concept of *poikilia* traces a problem for Plato concerning alluring yet potentially harmful experiences.

This problem, as well as the more fundamental difficulty of distinguishing the experience of beauty from that of a questionable fascination, throw into sharper relief the tensions that animate the role of beauty in Plato's ethical psychology, as perhaps in our own. By way of concluding this chapter, and preparing the way for the following, I should like to point a little farther down this avenue. The issue is well advanced by the following question: why does Plato not simply elect to skirt the danger he and others associate with *poikilia*? We have found it too reductive to think that he does, much less that he does so by inviting us to transcend this particularly sensuous experience or sensation in general. This encourages the thought that the

threat of becoming fascinated by a harmful attraction is not so much to be eliminated as negotiated. The need for negotiation stems from the way Plato's treatment of the concept of *poikilia* circumscribes – indeed, I would suggest, exemplifies – a broader ambivalence in his thought about vision and a deep ambivalence about the wondrous vision of beauty. Somewhat generally, vision is for Plato a metonym for foolishness. However, it is also a metaphor for knowledge and, sometimes, literally, what is required to advance from the former to the latter.⁶² Plato may be greatly exercised by the psychagogic power of *poikilia* and ungenerous, to put it mildly, of the epistemic merits of sensation. Yet he remains deeply invested in how the *sensory* experience of beauty can disrupt ordinary patterns of attention and stimulate ethical and epistemic development.

We must go beyond, but I do not believe against, the *Republic* to find the most sustained presentation of this idea, to Socrates' palinode in the *Phaedrus*. Its high-flying mythology organizes around the idea that vision, the clearest and sharpest of bodily senses, is naturally suited to receive the shine through which Beauty Itself uniquely manifests itself in worldly phenomena (φέγγος, *Phdr.* 250b3; ἐκφανεστάτον, 250d7). So it is that in special circumstances, the sight of a beautiful beloved could make a recently 'initiated' and already philosophical lover recollect the knowledge she acquired on her pre-natal romp round the cosmos. It is striking, however, that this part of the myth seems to want to account for and acutely registers the phenomenology of beauty and love 'down here.' At its most intense, the experience is one of wonder:

⁶² I borrow the contrast of metonym and metaphor from Pappas (2015): 49.

When he sees a godlike face or a body that has captured beauty well (θεοειδὲς πρόσωπον ἴδη κάλλος εὖ μεμιμημένον), first he shudders and some of his earlier awe (δειμάτων) comes over him; then, gazing at him, he reveres the beautiful boy like a god (προσορῶν ὡς θεὸν σέβεται), and if he did not fear being thought completely mad, he would sacrifice to the beloved as to an *agalma* or a god. (*Phdr.* 251a)

This religious imagery is meant to recommend a decorous love but also, more importantly, to capture an experience of the divine. The beloved seems godlike and the lover regards him so, his desire mixed with terror and awe. Tellingly, he would sacrifice to him as though an *agalma*, in this context a sacred statue in which the divine comes to presence despite its absence.⁶³ The beloved functions precisely the same way in relation to the form of beauty.

It is worth mentioning, if too briefly, that Plato seems to appropriate yet crucially modify a specific structure of wonder (*thauma*) common in Homer and archaic poetry. As Neer has shown, extending the analysis of Raymond Prier, in these sources to wonder (*thaumazein*) is not primarily to be in a subjective state, like puzzlement, but to perceive accurately *a* wonder, a *thauma*.⁶⁴ A wonder – often in epic, a wonder to behold (*thauma idesthai*) – manifests suddenly and radiantly, often terrifying and alluringly. It typically seems paradoxically double, like and unlike itself or in and out of place, often when, as above, the heightened vitality, speed, beauty, or power of the divine appears in a mortal. Socrates seems to draw on precisely this structure again when he recapitulates how a philosophic lover, struck by his beloved's face flashing like lightning (ἀστράπτουσιν), is imaginatively returned to his earlier 'vision' of the nature of beauty, frightening and sending him backwards, awestruck (ἔδεισέ τε καὶ σεφθεῖσα, *Phdr.* 254b). The vocabulary of awe here, like before, is of *sebas*, closely linked to *thauma*; but more telling is how

⁶³ See further Nightingale (2004): 163-64, and Kurke (2013): 154-59 in relation to wonder in the *Laws*.

⁶⁴ Neer (2010): esp. 58-67; Prier (1989).

this visual experience, a mortal somehow containing the presence or afterimage of the divine same, echoes archaic descriptions of wonder.

We saw some examples earlier.⁶⁵ These testified to a view, which Plato cannot accept wholesale, that what is *poikilos* is a proper object of wonder. Recall Anchises wondering (θαύμαινέν) at the sight of Aphrodite disguised as a maiden: “for she was clad in a robe more radiant than the brightness of fire, beautiful, golden, all-adorned (παμποίκιλον) ... a wonder to behold (θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι).” His erotic wonder begins at the elaborate design, rich texture, and brilliance of the robe. It involves, as Neer predicts, the twofold perception of the divine in a mortal. (Clearly, the robe was not a good fashion choice for disguise.) Wonder at the shimmering brooch of Odysseus had the same structure and orientation. All the viewers marveled (θαυμάζεσκον) at how the fawn and hound, *though* made of inanimate gold (ὥς οἱ χρύσειοι ἑόντες), seem to move with strange vitality. So too, the famous shield of Achilles. If his old armour was a beautiful wonder to behold (θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι καλά, *Il.* 18. 83-4), it pales in comparison to the shield on which Hephaestus adorns an image of the cosmos in many scenes and with radiant, moving figures (*cf.* πάντοσε δαιδάλλων, 479; δαίδαλα πολλά, 482). Most noteworthy is the scene Hephaestus is said to embellish (ποίκιλλε) of beautiful boys and girls dancing swiftly, the girls clad in beautiful garments and the boys glistening with oil and shining garments. An audience delights in the dance just as one wonders at shield (590-604), itself a meta-

⁶⁵ Others include Odysseus’ wonder at the beauty of Nausicca, the likes of which he had never seen: *Od.* 6. 150-68 (σέβας, 161; ἄγαμαί τε τέθηπά, 168); at Laertes: 12. 370-71; Naussica at the divinely magnified beauty and stature of a glistening Odysseus: 6. 237-43; Priam and Achilles at one another: *Il.* 24. 629-90, notable not just for each seeming godlike but also strangely both enemies and kin, reminding the other of a deceased loved one. Nightingale (2004): 256-57 emphasizes this last point.

textual prod to wonder at the Homeric composition. In all this, wonder is trained on *poikilia*, taken to mark the presence of a divine or quasi-divine skill.

One reason for Plato to model a beatific vision of beauty on this phenomenology of wonder would be to offer, in a recognizable way, a competing account of what one should wonder at. But in this wondrous vision also lies a rub. A principal current of Plato's ethical psychology and epistemology flows from his sense that the wondrous sight of beauty can intimate some worthier or somehow better way of living, some more divine condition; and he holds – or perhaps only hopes – that the motivational force of beauty leads to its fulfilment. Nonetheless, as his subtle treatment of the concept of *poikilia* demonstrates, Plato equally recognizes the danger and ambivalence that pervade such attraction. When beauty guides how we aspire to live, we follow its lead at great peril.

The Guise of the Beautiful

But when I love you, what do I love?
Augustine, *Confessions* X.vi

The value of the *kalon* in human action and community for Plato, as for the balance of ancient Greek thinkers, owes to what might be considered its overarching connection to the concept of the good, to *agathon*, the most general and most basic of ancient Greek ethical concepts. This connection lay behind the need of Socrates in the *Republic* to embody in the material culture a correct conception of which sort of character and life is *kalon*, so that what *seems kalon* on account of acculturation shall actually be so. This need stems from the thought that a conception of the *kalon* makes vivid and attractive an image of good or virtuous character and thereby a good or flourishing human life. We found it necessary to direct our focus onto thicker conceptual connections of the *kalon*, to examine in finer grain its social psychology of shame and honour and its immediate, and ambivalent, ties to cultural practices of esteem. All of these primary, mid-range connections, however, are held in place by the standing conviction that, as a value, the *kalon* must relate in some intimate way to the good. The philosophical problems traced in and through the *kalon* thus far have suggested that this general relation must be far from straightforward. Understanding how and why it is complicated shall show further the fundamental chief importance of dimensions of beauty to the Platonic *kalon* – and suggest further the chief importance of beauty to our aspirations to live well.

How, precisely, Plato conceives of the relation between the *kalon* and the good is a notoriously vexed question. It would perhaps be injudicious to propose that Plato has a fully resolved view of the issue when it appears, on the one hand, persistently though fleetingly broached in several dialogues and, on the other hand, treated as a theme with great nuance in one dialogue, the *Symposium*. How this dialogue approaches this question complicates it immediately as well, for we are encouraged to rephrase the question in terms of ethical psychology. The question becomes one of how, precisely, the *kalon* as the object, in some sense, of love or erotic desire (*erōs*) figures within human motivation more generally directed toward the living of a good life. However, the relation between the *kalon* and the good in erotic desire, particularly in Socrates' speech in the *Symposium*, presents considerable exegetical difficulties. Indeed, this chapter shall propose that these difficulties are the product of Plato's attempt to lay bare in this dialogue the ambiguous but unavoidable role of beauty in the structure of ethical motivation.

This final chapter shows how Plato theorizes in this dialogue the relation between the *kalon* and the good *as* a problem: Plato carefully distinguishes the *kalon* and the good in the psychology of erotic desire to emphasize that there is an open and pressing question whether one's most significant pursuits, insofar as they focus on the *kalon*, actually contribute to a good and flourishing life. My argument turns on the phenomenology of the *kalon*. What seems *kalon*, beautiful, presents itself and attracts erotic desire *immediately*. I first show that conceiving and desiring something as beautiful is prior to and therefore may be, unlike considerations of the good, independent of judgments about benefit. This psychological distinction opens the question whether what one finds beautiful is good by conducing to one's life going well. Against this

background ambiguity Diotima connects beauty to the good through the erotic pursuit of happiness. Yet, I argue, her account nonetheless accommodates this question and explains its possibility by emphasizing that lovers cannot articulate why or what, ultimately, they love. On my reconstruction of her account of human motivation, our most significant pursuits are aroused by and focused on beauty but aim, often unbeknownst to ourselves, at leading a good life. For Diotima, human agency may, even must, be explicable under the guise of the good. Yet what if, Plato asks, we confront the ways our lives are in fact led – more opaquely and complexly – under the guise of the beautiful?

§1 *A Psychological Distinction*

We enter in on a scene of considerable puzzlement. Socrates reports to his fellow symposiasts what he allegedly learned years ago about love from a Mantinean mystagogue named Diotima. Only after discussing the mythic provenance of Erōs, figured as a spirit (*daimōn*) mediating between mortals and gods and a philosopher scheming after wisdom, does Diotima place *erōs* squarely in the field of human motivation. The account of love that will follow describes its aim and function at the heart of mortal existence and then prescribes how this role may be transformed to achieve a flourishing human life. Significantly, the crucial turn comes when the imaginary Diotima asks an imaged young Socrates the following: why, or what really, does the lover of beautiful things love? (ἐρᾷ ὁ ἐρῶν τῶν καλῶν: τί ἐρᾷ; *Symp.* 204d5). Young Socrates replies that a lover wants that beautiful things come to be for himself (γενέσθαι αὐτῷ, d7). Yet this reply invites or, punning on the subject, longs for (ποθεῖ) a further question. This further question leaves Socrates at a loss and leads Diotima to take a different but related tack:

DIOTIMA: ... “What will be for him to whom the beautiful things come to be?”

YOUNG SOCRATES: I said I was not at all yet able to answer this question readily.

D: ‘Well,’ she said, ‘answer just as if someone, changing things around, were to inquire using the good instead of the beautiful: ‘Come, Socrates, the lover loves good things; why does he love them?’”

S: ‘So that they come to be for himself,’ I said.

D: ‘And what will be for him to whom good things come to be?’

S: ‘That one,’ I said, ‘I can answer more resourcefully: he’ll be happy.’

D: ‘Since those who are happy are happy by virtue of the acquisition of good things, and one no longer needs to ask, ‘For what sake does someone who wishes to be happy wish it?’ Rather the answer seems to be complete.’”

(*Symp.* 204e7-205a3)

... τί ἔσται ἐκείνῳ ᾧ ἂν γένηται τὰ καλά;

οὐ πάντῃ ἔφην ἔτι ἔχειν ἐγὼ πρὸς ταύτην τὴν ἐρώτησιν προχείρως ἀποκρίνασθαι.

ἀλλ’, ἔφη, ὥσπερ ἂν εἴ τις μεταβάλων ἀντὶ τοῦ καλοῦ τῷ ἀγαθῷ χρώμενος πυθνάνοιτο: φέρε, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἐρᾷ ὁ ἐρῶν τῶν ἀγαθῶν: τί ἐρᾷ;

γενέσθαι, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, αὐτῷ.

καὶ τί ἔσται ἐκείνῳ ᾧ ἂν γένηται τὰγαθὰ;

τοῦτ’ εὐπορώτερον, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, ἔχω ἀποκρίνασθαι, ὅτι εὐδαίμων ἔσται.

κτῆσει γάρ, ἔφη, ἀγαθῶν οἱ εὐδαίμονες εὐδαίμονες, καὶ οὐκέτι προσδεῖ ἐρέσθαι ἵνα τί δὲ βούλεται εὐδαίμων εἶναι ὁ βουλόμενος; ἀλλὰ τέλος δοκεῖ ἔχειν ἢ ἀπόκρισις...

Socrates cannot say what shall be for a lover who, finally, attains the beautiful things (*ta kala*) she so desires. At least he cannot answer readily (προχείρως). He can answer straightaway, however, when Diotima asks what comes from having good things (*ta agatha*): the lover will be happy. That answer is complete (τέλος) because the appeal of this optimal condition can be simply taken as given, as it was earlier (180b7, 188d8, 193d6, 195a5-7), and because it is somewhat conceptually confused to inquire, as Diotima did earlier, after some desired consequence of being happy.¹ It is from there a short step to Diotima’s innovative and central claim that everyone is properly speaking a lover, though not usually so called, insofar as everyone desires to be happy. At once

¹ Notice that the *answer* ‘to be happy’ is complete. It is not evident, as Sheffield (2006): 77-9 for example suggests, that here Diotima anticipates an Aristotelian notion of a final end; but cf. τέλος at 210e3. Perhaps this notion is implicit, however, in a full explanation why the answer is complete: formally speaking, there is nothing apart from happiness for the sake of which one wants to be happy.

broader and deeper than the paradigmatic sense of interpersonal sexual desire, *erōs* turns out to be the motivational source of the various long-term projects, be they business ventures, athletic training, philosophy, or what not, by which we pursue a good and happy life (205a-d), indeed aspire to attain the good forever (206a11-12, 207a2). What is striking, though, if easy to miss amid this dizzying account, is that the good becomes focal only because Socrates could not state what flows from having *beautiful* things. It is quite true that he, via Diotima, can now say it promotes happiness and specifies how so and what this truly means. But we should like to know why, and with what philosophical significance, Plato emphasizes the perplexity to which this account answers.² Notice, he has Socrates break the innermost narrative frame to report his confusion directly to his peers and Diotima call explicit attention to her substitution. Which forces the question: what is the point of having Socrates show himself *unable* to state why, ultimately, lovers love beautiful things? This question is crucial to understanding the relation and, more significantly, distinction between beauty (*to kalon*) and the good in erotic desire.

The question has been seldom pressed, however, and in fact widely suppressed by a common approach to the above passage. Taking the central interest of Diotima's substitution to be logical validity, some scholars object that the substitution is unjustified, rightly noting that only the converse, that good things are beautiful, was accepted as a premise by Agathon (201c2), whose position young Socrates is made to take up (d3-7). Most scholars propose that the

² The pivotal question speaks of beauties in the neuter accusative plural rather than the genitive. The genitive earlier is ambiguous between masculine (many beautiful males) and neuter (a potentially wider class of beauties), but its surface grammar still suggests the paradigmatic pursuit of beautiful young males. While *erōs* traditionally includes other passionate desires, such as for food or drink, as Halperin (1985): 165, Ludwig (2002): 121 and others observe (despite Diotima's suggestion to the contrary: *Symp.* 205b4-6, d5-7), Socrates may be perplexed because the neuter *ta kala* asks after desire for *anything* beautiful. But, again, we should like to know why Plato writes this shift into the text.

substitution is justified because it assumes tacitly that whatever is beautiful is good or, more strongly, expresses a Platonic thesis that the beautiful and the good have identical senses or, stronger still, referents.³ While this last equivalence rests thinly on a parallel between Forms of Beauty and the Good in the *Symposium* and *Republic*, there is unquestionably an intimate relation between the two values in classical Greek thought and practice, as in Plato. We would expect that, as a value central to motivation and admiration, the *kalon* is somehow subordinate to the good, the most fundamental evaluative concept. This connection receives specific shape and considerable force from the aristocratic conceit that one's splendid (*kalos*) body and deeds supposedly manifest one's good nature and exemplary authority as an *agathos*. Against this background, it is neither terribly surprising nor controversial to substitute the *kalon* by the good, which occurs similarly without incident at *Men.* 77b-78b, or to find interlocutors elsewhere take for granted that what is good is beautiful and, interestingly less frequently, that what is beautiful is also good. Yet however closely Diotima connects and appears to equate these values, our target passage does not indicate a seamless correlation between beauty and the good.⁴ Quite the opposite.

³ Logical objection: *e.g.*, Dover (1980): *ad.* 204c7-206a13, Obdrzalek (2010): 430. Logical justification because beautiful is good: *e.g.*, Wedgwood (2009): 300, Nehamas (2007b): 107 n40; Identity of sense: *e.g.*, Moss (2012): 206; Identity of reference: Dover (1980): *ad.* 201c1-5, 203d4, d6, 204e1-2. More cautious, though misleading, is Rowe (1998): *ad.* 201c1-2: "204eff. apparently shows her, and S., happily behaving as if 'good' can readily be substituted for 'beautiful' in any context," leaving the question of identity "open" (*ad.* 204e1-2).

⁴ Part of the appeal of this view may stem from the supposition that Diotima speaks for Socrates and Socrates for Plato, to say nothing of the great influence of Platonist interpretation that adopts something like this supposition. I would like simply to note that while Socrates claims to have been persuaded by Diotima (πέπεισμαι δ' ἐγώ, *Symp.* 212b2), the same phrase elsewhere connotes epistemic limits of a myth: *Gorg.* 524a8-b1, 526d; *Phd.* 108e, 109a. Even if what 'Diotima' says were presented as most authoritative among the speeches, which is by no means evident (see Rowe (1998)), it would not follow that Socrates, much less Plato, endorses the teaching fully.

That Socrates can answer immediately what comes from having good but not beautiful things shows that the terms cannot have the same sense. This is independent of whether the concepts have the same extension, but the sheer fact that an answer is forthcoming suggests the main thrust of the substitution is not, at any rate, logical or ontological but pedagogical. Its purpose is to move an understanding of love forward when Socrates becomes stuck, in two related ways.⁵ The first is by evoking resources, issuing from the very concept of the good, that situates love within a wider framework of ethical motivation.⁶ The good is a causal, relational, and teleological concept. It is causal in a sense indicated by its semantic overlap with terms for what is beneficial, useful, and advantageous, that being good is chiefly a matter of producing beneficial consequences. To be good is to be good-*for* doing something or other, relative to something's nature or some agent's ends. Just as one might cite health as (a) good to motivate and to explain undergoing a painful medical treatment, because one desires outcomes and possibilities afforded by health, such as enjoyment, time with loved ones or reaching ripe old age, the good answers the question *why*, indeed why *ultimately*, one loves by evoking the lineaments of a *good life*. These conceptual connections explain why Socrates can readily acknowledge, like Eryximachus and Agathon intimate (188d5-8, 202c10-11), that one desires good things for the sake

⁵ The pedagogical point of the substitution is well noted by Richardson Lear (2006b): 103-4 and Hunter (2004): 87.

⁶ 'Resources', to pick up on young Socrates' pun (ἐνπορώτερον, 205e1) on the nature of Erōs, who thrives when it finds resources (ἐνπορήσει, 203e2) and is never wholly without means or *aporetic*, like its mother, Poverty (203c1, e4; 204b7) or young Socrates himself. For the following framework, cf. *Rep.* 505a-506a, *Men.* 87e-89a; *Euthyd.* 280b-d, although *Symp.* 204e-205a lacks their qualifications that conventional goods, such as wealth, are good only conditionally because they must be used properly, virtuously or knowledgeably, to be beneficial. Diotima and Socrates perhaps have in mind only goods that always and automatically benefit their possessors. On the good as a 'causal concept,' see Barney (2010a): 369.

of (ἵνα τί) being happy (εὐδαίμων), that is, living *well*. To acquire good things in this framework just is to be happy. And there is no further question why anyone would want that.

This framework, in turn, allows Diotima through her substitution to correct the reasonable assumption (ἐπιεικής, *Symp.* 201a8; cf. *Charm.* 167d-168a), made central by Agathon (196e4-5, 197b3-c1, 201a5-10) and Phaedrus (178dc5-d4), that beauty is the object of love without qualification. Diotima herself studiously avoids referring to love *of* the beautiful. She sets it 'in relation to' the beautiful (περὶ τὸ καλόν: 203c4, 206e1) and carefully attributes to Socrates locutions in which the beautiful is a genitive object of love (τῶν καλῶν, ὡς σὺ φήεις, 204d3; οὐ τοῦ καλοῦ ὁ ἔρως, ὡς σὺ οἶεις, 206e2-3). She proposes that beauty is rather the necessary impetus and environment for procuring goods that we mortal, incomplete beings by nature lack. Only the experience of beauty moves one to give creative expression to one's deepest commitments and most powerful attractions, producing whatever promotes one's conception of happiness and, along with it (μετά, 207a1), an approximation to immortality (206c-208b) by 'giving birth' to children, heroic deeds, glorious poetry, political reform, or philosophical discourse and ideas. From the notion that the value of beauty is subordinate to happiness, that having beauty is not itself the final end of love, it does not follow, however, that beauty is valued merely as an instrumental means to good things.⁷ This is perhaps a possible, albeit fiendish, orientation to the *kalon*, but it is customarily valued for its own sake – the paradigmatic case is fixated erotic attention – and, if anything, our target passage would suggest that the *kalon* is *not* valued (merely) for the sake of something else; otherwise young Socrates could say what it was. Already we can

⁷ Pace Neumann (1965): 42-44, White (1989): 154, and Scott and Welton (2008): 110.

begin to see that, insofar as lovers are directed intentionally toward beauty, their motivation is enormously complex. To equate beauty and the good would be to dampen that complexity. What is more, it would dampen that complexity by ignoring, textually speaking, a pivotal distinction that Diotima makes. In her account, erotic desire is, properly speaking, *of the good* (τῶν ἀγαθῶν, 205d2; τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, 206d1).

The claim bears obvious relation to and may bear on interpretation of the familiar Socratic maxim that all desire is for the good, although its scope is strictly limited to *erotic* desire. Everyone, we are told, *loves* nothing other than the good (*Symp.* 206a1).⁸ This does not mean that lovers invariably cotton on to genuine goods, as though everyone necessarily pursued worthwhile ends whether they knew it or not. Diotima does claim, *contra* Aristophanes' myth, that one does not desire one's 'other half' or to be 'whole' unless that happens somehow to be good (ἐὰν μὴ τυγχάνῃ γέ που... ἀγαθὸν ὄν). Yet this claim rests on the observation that one would voluntarily amputate limbs if they seem harmful, say, if diseased (ἐὰν αὐτοῖς δοκῇ τὰ ἑαυτῶν πονηρὰ εἶναι, 205e1-4). Diotima does not conflate *de dicto* and *de re* ascriptions of desire, as she may initially appear to do, for her point does not concern how lovers represent their beloveds or what specifically they love, in other words neither the intensional content nor the extensional object of lovers. Her point concerns what I shall call the *formal aim* of erotic desire.⁹

⁸ This qualification does not decide the disputed question whether Diotima accepts (though does assert) or denies (though not explicitly) that *all* desire is for the good, as Socrates holds in supposedly early dialogues (e.g., *Men.* 77b-78b, *Gorg.* 468a-c) and is thought to deny supposedly later by positing non-rational desire in the *Republic* and *Phaedrus*. See Sheffield (2006): 227-39 for persuasive argument that the text is indeterminate, with further bibliography.

⁹ On this subject, Barney (2010*b*) is most valuable. 'Formal aim' broadly follows what Halperin (1985) calls 'intentional aim' in contrast to the intentional object of erotic desire.

The claim is that erotic desire is by its nature an attempt to obtain what in fact constitutes a flourishing life.

While Diotima professes an intellectually rarified vision of what such a life consists in and a notoriously depersonalized view of how love contributes to it, her basic thought is supposed to be a commonplace. Even the deeply disturbed and drunk Alcibiades stumbles into the dialogue asking, as if confirming the thesis, to be led to ‘the good,’ his host Agathon (212d5-7). Just as no one would want to hold onto diseased limbs, one wants the ends to which erotic desire makes one attached, so to speak, to be beneficial. To introduce the category of the good is to emphasize this inherently normative orientation, that love wants to desire what is truly *desirable*. Or as Socrates remarks in a parallel passage at *Rep.* 6, 505d6-e4, whereas most people are content to have, do, and believe what seems or is reputed to be (τὰ δοκοῦντα: *Rep.* 505d6, 8) just or beautiful, even if it is not so, no one is content to have what merely seems but is not *good*; for everyone does everything they do for the sake of what really is good.¹⁰ Leaving aside exegesis of this notoriously condensed passage, and thus the question whether *its* talk of the good is more metaphysically robust and less deflationary than I have suggested is its counterpart in the *Symposium*, this textual

¹⁰ The first half of this contrast need not imply, as Reeve (2013): 110-11 supposes, that one does not care whether an item desired on account of its (apparent) beauty is in fact good. If ‘all soul’ pursues the good in everything it does, desiring what seems just or beautiful is still oriented to some conception of the good. These seemingly opposed ideas cohere if Socrates is concerned, as seems likely given the animating concern of the dialogue, with agents *desiring to seem* just or beautiful to others, independently of whether or not they are so, on account of thinking reputation matters centrally to a good life. See Barney (2010b): 53. The ambiguity of *dokein* (τὰ δοκοῦντα... ταῦτα πράττειν καὶ κεκτηῖσθαι καὶ δοκεῖν, *Rep.* 505d6-7) would then facilitate a shift from concern about reputation, satisfiable by (mere?) appearances, to an exclusive concern to acquire goods, which are not. If some general notion of *seeming* spans d6-9, it is perhaps that beauty and justice are more readily tied than is the good to standards of evaluation ‘internal’ to a community or individual.

parallel suggests further that only those conceptual connections of the good to benefit and happiness clarify the formal aim and normative orientation of love in a compelling way.

Our question becomes why Plato introduces this idea by emphasizing Socrates' earlier perplexity about erotic desire for beauty. Others have observed that beauty and the good are conceived of differently in general and that these values play distinct roles in the particular economy of erotic desire.¹¹ Yet young Socrates' perplexity reflects a further and I believe more troubling feature that, in the context of love, there is not the straightforward inference we might have expected from finding something beautiful to thinking it promotes a flourishing life. There is instead a conceptual gap at the level of ethical psychology. What seems beautiful *need not* seem good – our attractions may not seem to help us.¹² There is therefore psychological space for the pressing question, put to oneself first-personally, whether the arc of one's attractions *does* bend in a beneficial direction toward what is good, that is, whether the constitution of one's erotic desires is, all things considered, desirable. It may be, as I shall suggest later, that the erotic curriculum that Diotima prescribes in the so-called 'higher mysteries' intends partially to close this question; but independent of this proposal, I shall also argue, the subtle introduction of the good as the

¹¹ See most especially White (1989) and Sheffield (2006): 94-8.

¹² This is to supplement the pithy formulation of Price (1989): 14 "the *kalon* draws us and the *agathon* helps us." This formulation of the view that the *kalon* and the good are coextensive concerns ontology, not psychology or phenomenology, and therefore seems to me preferable to Dover's, which threatens to build considerations of the good into the mode of presentation of the *kalon*: "Anything which is *kalon*, i.e. which looks or sounds good (or is good to contemplate) is also *agathon*, i.e. it serves a desirable purpose or performs a desirable function, and *vice versa*" ((1980): ad. 201c2). Beyond omitting any reference to the attractive force of the *kalon*, this latter formulation obscures how the relation of the *kalon* to the good could arise as a question, as it surely does for Plato and his contemporaries.

formal aim of erotic desire attempts to render explicable, rather than to explain away, its perplexing and uneasy focus on beauty.

If this turn to psychology brings us nearer to the heart of the matter, it puts at some remove, and in a less familiar light, the plausible hypothesis that Plato believes that some item is beautiful if and only if it is good. Encouraged though not directly supported by Diotima's substitution, this hypothesis does have in its favor the pre-theoretical appeal and textual support mentioned above. Moreover, this hypothesis of coextension would do profound and necessary work at the foundations of Plato's philosophical thinking. It would, for example, bolster the 'optimistic' conviction that the world of human action is in principle intelligible to reason and structured toward human flourishing. If beauty and the good were presupposed to be coextensive, it would become more reasonable to insist, against the tenor of some ancient tragedies, that seemingly irreconcilable conflicts of value are merely the products of errors of cognition, evaluation, and motivation. More positively, Plato could depend on the unique experience of beauty to make independent facts about the human good manifest and attractive to embodied, socially situated, and imperfectly rational souls, as his ethical epistemology and psychology requires. Knowledge of how best to act and live is remote; beliefs about these are only so motivating. Attractions to (some conception of) beauty, Plato appreciates, provide a necessary and more foundational guide.

But if this last line of thought is promising, then there is also something amiss in the temptation to secure this connection to the good by reducing the nature of the beautiful either to some attractive aspect of the good (or The Good) or to some abstract principle such as functional

adaptation, order, or unity.¹³ Not only does the present context not enter into such ontological explanations, but it indicates that this level of explanation does not meet the point. Plato is primarily interested in the psychological or phenomenological perspective from which beauty and the good *show up* differently as values and have different motivational grips on an agent trying to discover how to live. From this perspective, more immediately relevant than what is beautiful is what *seems* beautiful, and strikingly, this experience need not make essential reference to the good. To read coextension into *Symp.* 204e-205a is to avoid the peculiar difficulty about beauty that it raises. It is therefore to obscure how possessing so secure a connection between beauty and the good will constitute an achievement, the end rather than presupposition of a line of thought adumbrated by this episode.

The key notion on which this cluster of issues turns is that what is beautiful, *kalon*, presents itself and attracts erotic desire *immediately*. The immediacy of the *kalon* is in fact a motif of the dialogue. When we first meet Socrates beautified, washed and wearing snazzy sandals – our peculiar introduction to beauty, whose relation to the good and background relevance to our target passage we must unpack later – he happens all of sudden upon Aristodemus (*Symp.* 174a2). Socrates later appears, conspicuously like the Form of Beauty personified, “suddenly” to the sight of Alcibiades, who himself arrives in his extravagant beauty suddenly and uninvited to Agathon’s with his band of revelers (ἐξαίφνης: 210e, 212c6, 213c1).¹⁴ Whereas the good is the object of deliberation or judgment about what is best overall (*Rep.* 439cd), the *kalon* neither enters

¹³ For focal emphasis on functional adaptation and order: Barney (2010a): 364-66; unity: Gerson (2006) and, following suit, Riegel (2011), who provides a thorough defense of the hypothesis of co-extension. Highly relevant in this connection are, *inter alia*, *Rep.* 420cd, 601d; *Hip. Mai.* 290c-291d; *Tim.* 31bc, 87c.

¹⁴ As Nussbaum (1986): 184, 192 has brought to our attention.

nor necessarily involves psychological operation in terms of rational deliberation, inference, or application of concepts. It typically bypasses or works independently of such operations; it works too quickly for them. Such immediacy lends to the notion that the *kalon* is something ‘obvious,’ intuitively and easily apprehended, just as one commonly thinks, if only at first blush, that “beauty is really as obvious as blue: one does not have to work hard at seeing it when it is there” (Danto (2003): 89).

Yet unlike blue and like beauty, the *kalon* appears immediately in a normative register. What seems *kalon* appears as *worthy* of desire, emulation, and widespread admiration. Thus Socrates roundly, if jestingly, praises Agathon’s display of “beautiful wisdom” (καλῆς σοφίας) in his poetic victory the previous day, remarking how it was brilliant (λαμπρά) and manifest (ἐκφανής), shining brightly forth (ἐξέλαμψεν) before over thirty thousand witnesses (*Symp.* 175e2-7). In earlier chapters, we examined how these features of the *kalon*, its immediacy, normativity, and publicity, conspire to regulate irreducibly social practices of esteem, precisely the sort that support Agathon’s reputation, and how the concept is therefore distinctively apt to structure the perceptual, affective, and motivational habits of non-rational children toward a virtuous and flourishing life. The process, we may recall, involves forming communities of thought and feeling organized by a shared sense of a beautiful character and life, worthy of admiration, culled from supposedly beautiful images throughout a material culture (*Rep.* 401b-402a). This immediate, intuitive appeal of beauty, Rachel Barney notes, partly explains why young Socrates finds it more difficult to explicate why lovers love beautiful rather than good

things. The *kalon* registers positive value far less in terms of beneficial consequences than does the good.¹⁵ What follows for the distinctive valence of beauty in human life?

§2 *From Disinterested Admiration to Agency*

One notion that has been thought to follow is that the proper response to the *kalon* is *disinterested*. Indeed, this conclusion might seem to follow straightforwardly from the phenomenological fact of immediacy. If the *kalon* can be perceived and embraced by non-rational children, its response cannot essentially involve logical calculation or inference, *a fortiori* not calculation or inference of benefits for the agent herself. Thus, Barney herself proceeds in her insightful discussion of the Platonic *kalon* from its immediate, intuitive appeal to the claim that the *kalon* is “simply what appropriately elicits the disinterested approbation of a spectator as having positive value in itself” ((2010a): 370). Her argument is not without historical precedence. Its structure follows the train of thought by which Shaftesbury first introduced the concept of disinterestedness into modern British philosophical aesthetics, maintaining in his *Moralists* of 1709 that since infants respond to beauty “no sooner than the eye opens upon figures,” appreciation of beauty cannot involve calculation of personal advantage ((1999 / 1711): III.3). It would take a variation of this argument by Hutcheson to yoke the immediacy of beauty to the notion, which motivates most contemporary appeals to disinterestedness, that beauty is most apparent where benefit and utility are not (so, Barney (2010a): 369-70), or in Hutcheson’s phrase, that perception of beauty neither arises from nor varies with “any knowledge of principles proportions, causes, or of the usefulness

¹⁵ However, this is not to say, with Barney (2010a): 369, that the *kalon* registers “positive value *without* reference to any envisaged effects.” While I find myself in agreement with much of her illuminating discussion, I remain unconvinced that the *kalon* is as dissociated from benefit as thoroughly as she suggests.

of the object,” however much such knowledge “may superadd a distinct rational pleasure from prospects of advantage” for oneself or for anyone ((1738): I.xii.II). The concept of disinterestedness, then, has seemed apt to distinguish the *kalon* psychologically from the good by insisting that the former is not ordinarily, nor appropriately, conceived as providing anything of value beyond itself.¹⁶

This assumption determines the interpretation of Suzanne Obdrzalek, though in starker form and with different consequences for understanding Diotima’s substitution and the ensuing account of love. Obdrzalek assumes that young Socrates *mistakes* the proper attitude toward beauty when he inquires initially what use, function, or purpose (τίνα χρείαν, *Symp.* 204c8) Erōs has for human beings and when he responds, after Diotima paraphrases this question, that lovers want beautiful things to become their own. The alleged mistake is to value beauty merely as a means and not as an end ((2010): 416-17). According to Obdrzalek, Diotima unmask this misconception in two stages. She first *appeases* young Socrates’ assumption that beauty is merely a means by giving him a *false* picture on which erotic desire principally concerns benefiting oneself, by aiming to secure the good or immortality; Diotima then reverses this picture when she describes what it is to love “correctly” (ὀρθῶς: *Symp.* 210a1-2, 211b7), at precisely which point she reintroduces beauty as the true aim of love, though no longer as a means to a “self-serving pursuit” but as an end outside of oneself and mortal concerns that commands “disinterestedness admiration” (Obdrzalek (2010): 420). The terms of disinterestedness incline Obdrzalek to structure her ingenious account by a stark opposition between possession and admiration that

¹⁶ Janaway (1995): ch. 3 argues similarly that the *kalon* is divorced from benefit, though avoids recourse to the concept of disinterestedness.

has inflected the concept since its inception. In the ascent to the form of Beauty, she argues, the earlier “possession-based model of love becomes eclipsed by one focused on contemplation and admiration” (432); Socrates discovers that “the proper object of *erōs* was beauty all along, but that the appropriate relation to it is one of selfless contemplation” (439).¹⁷

Those who characterize the *kalon* in terms of disinterestedness do not always take themselves to be speaking in the analogue of beauty, however much the terms may owe their appeal and sense to the fact that the concept of disinterestedness has dominated western philosophical theories of beauty since the early eighteenth-century. This combination of ideas is perhaps made less curious if we remember that the concept has come to organize aesthetic inquiry beyond beauty and into the more generic field of ‘aesthetic value.’¹⁸ However, it also reflects something of the muddle in which our thinking about beauty finds itself and the obstacles this presents to understanding the *kalon*. If it is an evasion of beauty to propose, with one recent commentator, that even in Diotima’s speech *kalon* “could equally well have been translated by such terms as ‘fine’ or ‘admirable’ or even ‘honourable’” because it supposedly tracks “*agent-neutral, non-instrumental value*,” it is a gross distortion of the *kalon* and beauty alike to propose

¹⁷ I am sympathetic to Obdrzalek’s suggestion ((2010): 418-20) that when Diotima underscores the fleetingness of mortal bodies and mental inventories (*Symp.* 207d-208a), it is difficult not to hear her encouraging us to identify with and to assimilate ourselves to some more perfect and immortal order. So too that those who seek immortal glory point toward this virtuous ambition but go astray in aiming to perpetuate *themselves* as good; note the conspicuity of their own deeds for others to admire: καλὰ ἀποφηνάμενοι ἔργα, 209e2. But this neither encourages nor entails that immortality *per se*, much less the good, does not belong to the formal aim of erotic desire.

¹⁸ On the development of the concept of disinterestedness and 18th-century debates about the relation between beauty and utility, see Guyer (1996): chs. 2-3

that this value solicits “disinterested appreciation and delight” *in contrast to* “practical attitudes such as *desire*” (Wedgwood (2009): 302, 322).

I shall argue that this general strategy mischaracterizes the psychology of the *kalon* for Plato and divests us of a richer approach to its distinction from the good. Yet one does well to begin by wondering how helpful an appeal to disinterestedness could be when, despite or perhaps due to its historical lineage, the contours of this response are unstable, contested, or, according to some, untenable. It has become increasingly questionable whether aesthetic engagement is paradigmatically or even *possibly* disinterested, though immediate challenges to Kantian disinterestedness by Herder and later, more famously, by Nietzsche indicate that this question is by no means recent. The question itself focuses the fact concealed by the ease with which the concept has been invoked by classical scholars, as though it needed no elaboration, that it remains unclear what, exactly, this attitude is supposed to involve or exclude. The previous quotation, for example, opposes disinterestedness to practical attitudes, following the broadly Kantian model that feeds more recent notions of ‘aesthetic’ interest in mere contemplation or perception.¹⁹ This surely cannot apply to the *kalon*, the target of erotic *desire*. Barney, meanwhile, is more careful to propose that Plato engages the *kalon* in an ethical project to transform *what* one

¹⁹ The merits and 18th-century ancestry of the above notion of ‘aesthetic disinterestedness’ were defended in a pair of influential essays by Jerome Stolnitz (1961a) and (1961b); but see Rind (2002) for a necessary reappraisal of the historical sources. Danto (1994): 383 nicely puts the criticism that aesthetics is not “essentially a contemplative address to objects, divorced from practical considerations of every sort... As if we left aesthetics behind when we snap out of our contemplative stance and begin to duke it out with reality!” This is the notion of disinterestedness from which Richardson Lear (2006b): 121 rightly distances the Platonic *kalon* and, for that matter, beauty. But as I suggest above, there are subtler notions of disinterestedness that do not oppose contemplation and practical desire or action. I might note that this lack of opposition comports well with the way in which Plato generally treats ‘contemplation’ (*theōria*), though see *Tht.* 172c-177c for a limiting case which intimates Aristotle’s distinction of practical and purely theoretical wisdom. Many thanks to Wolfgang Mann for discussion of this passage.

desires but also *how* one desires, transforming – again echoing Shaftesbury in his use of disinterestedness against Hobbes – appropriative desires for private gain into various forms of (disinterestedness) admiration and emulation, friendship, and contemplation, ultimately directed toward the divine. According to Barney, Platonic education of desire involves learning which sorts of things are truly good, wisdom, for instance, as opposed to money, and by finding these goods beautiful, fit to be admired rather than amassed, learning what it truly means to *have* good things (Barney (2010a): 373-77). While Barney contrasts, similarly to Obdrzalek, appropriative desire for the good with disinterested admiration for the *kalon*, her operative contrast is heuristic.²⁰ Her point is that the contrast collapses once these motivations are properly educated and these values properly understood. One can and plausibly should accept the general lines of this illuminating proposal while wondering, however, whether disinterestedness is necessary or felicitous to capture the distinctive response to the *kalon*. I would like to suggest it is neither.

One immediate complication is that its proponents fail to specify *which* notion of disinterestedness is at issue. If a disinterested response precludes contemplation of apparent benefit, as Barney and Obdrzalek seem inclined to propose, following a dominant trajectory of aesthetics crystallized in Kant's notion of free beauty, then we risk distinguishing beauty and the good too sharply. It becomes difficult to see how Plato could entertain the hypothesis that something is beautiful insofar as it seems beneficial or useful by performing its function well (*e.g.*, *Hip. Mai.* 295c4-297b7). If disinterestedness admits pleasure in the perception of functional excellence, however, as was characteristic of eighteenth-century theories – Hutcheson's was once

²⁰ While also emphasizing the transformative dimension of disinterestedness, Obdrzalek (2010) unfortunately construes that dimension in terms of what seems to me an overly moralized and anachronistic dichotomy of self- and object-centered attention.

the minority opinion – then we accommodate this strand of Plato’s thinking but risk collapsing beauty and its experience into a (literal) species of the good. All of which reinforces that their relation appears in Plato as a live philosophical question. I suspect that the former, currently more resonant notion of disinterestedness misleads by closing this question. However, my chief concern lies less with any specific construal than with how the concept of disinterestedness in general suppresses the role of the *kalon* in agency.

The concern is twofold: the concept imposes an infelicitous contrast between appropriative desire and admiration and cannot make perspicuous the creative aspect of the response to the *kalon*. To the first charge. Just as if one thinks the *kalon* merits ‘selfless’ love devoted exclusively to a beloved (a Romantic notion against which the translation of *erōs* as ‘erotic desire’ cautions), if one thinks it merits disinterestedness, one inclines to find a problem in the ideas of beautiful things becoming ‘one’s own’ (γενέσθαι αὐτῷ, *Symp.* 204d7) and of becoming happy through acquiring good things (κτησίς, 205a1) to which disinterested admiration appears a solution. It is true that the noun κτησίς standardly applies to goods, not beautiful, just, pious, or other valuable things, often conceived as property over which one may claim ownership.²¹ Meno uses its verbal form, κτάομαι, in this sense when proposing that virtue consists in acquiring goods such as health, gold and silver, political honours and offices (*Men.* 78c7). Much to Barney’s conviction that Plato is exercised by the pleonectic tendencies of an Athenian aristocrat or a Thrasymachus, it is noteworthy that, as at *Symp.* 204e-205aff., Socrates introduces the good after Meno defines virtue as procuring and using *kala* (77a2-5) before leading him to acknowledge that

²¹ LSJ s.v. κτησίς.

everyone desires the good, but that virtue obliges that it be procured *justly*. This strategy may partly aim to evoke and undermine Meno's rapacious conception of virtue.

Nonetheless, any such unsavory connotations do not belong to Diotima's mention of acquisition, much less the mention of beautiful things 'becoming one's own' ('having' or 'getting' is perhaps prejudicial) or of the 'use' of Erōs for human beings.²² This last, for one, is rather innocuous in context. It does not seem unreasonable for young Socrates to ask how Erōs, a *philosopher* of all things, can be useful to human beings when the positive value and practical bearing of philosophers were perfectly live issues for the contemporary audience of (older) Socrates' – to say nothing of our own – especially with Aristophanes present, whose *Clouds* (paraphrased at *Symp.* 221b2-3) juxtaposes to great comedic effect the ethereal character of philosophy and its practical benefit in hair-splitting arguments. Or then again perhaps young Socrates is wondering, more sympathetically to philosophy, whether it is not only semi-divine spirits but also human beings *too* who can engage in this activity. However that may be, more significant is that it is far from obvious how this spirit lacking wisdom, beauty, and goodness could possibly fulfil its stated task of facilitatating human communication with the divine; and most significant of all, such an interest in benefit to human beings is entirely appropriate if one is

²² Halperin (1985): 177 might seem to imply otherwise when he proposes that Diotima denies that erotic desire is of beauty *tout court* "to avoid the otherwise inescapable implication that erotic desire *aims* at the *possession* of beautiful things... thus, to characterize it implicitly as an acquisitive passion... in other words, as an appetite for beauty. That is precisely where youthful Socrates went wrong when Diotima initially interrogated him." But the appeal to appetite suggests the problem is mistaking which *kind* of desire is erotic. Whether we wish to agree with this assessment, Halperin's main concern, suggested by the elaboration that beauty "does not exhaust the purpose of erotic desire," is to reinforce the explanatory power of distinguishing the intentional object and aim of erotic desire. Below, I offer a way to develop Halperin's insight into this distinction.

giving, not only an encomium, but an outline of an ethical psychology focused around the concept of *eudaimonia*.

So it is perhaps not necessary to quibble whether we may speak unobjectionably in English of ‘having’ or ‘possessing’ beloveds when the ancient Greek here, the language of acquisition, κτήσις, is quite evaluatively neutral. It attests to the basic ethical starting point that one wants components of one’s life to make it a flourishing one.²³ Diotima is picking up Phaedrus’ same use when he praised Erōs for helping human beings acquire virtue and happiness (ἀρετῆς καὶ εὐδαιμονίας κτήσιν ἀνθρώποις, *Symp.* 180b7-8). So too in the *Republic* Socrates states that acquisition of the good (κτήσιν... ἀγαθὴν) is the principal ethical and epistemic goal without which one cannot benefit from understanding anything else (*Rep.* 505b1-2). If an interest to acquire goods is not ethically problematic *per se*, why set up a framework that seeks its correction through an opposed, disinterested admiration?

Related to the issue of textual fidelity is that a sharp distinction in kind between appropriative and admiring attitudes occludes the philosophical insight in the notion that the response to beauty is to desire to make it one’s own. The response to beauty is indeed appropriative in a way, but that way typically coincides with admiration. These attitudes can come apart, of course, a distinction we know to mark by insisting that young Socrates does not mean to endorse a relationship of personal domination, an impossibly instrumental relation to beauty, or that economic ownership sometimes conveyed by κτήσις (for goods, recall). But

²³ Thus, while Dover (1980) *ad.* 204c7-206a13 notes that “there are particular senses in which we wish to ‘have’ or to ‘possess’ persons with whom we are ‘in love’,” he may concede too much in continuing that “it is absurd to say that we wish to treat as items at our disposal those whom we love. Hence this [κτήσις at 205a1] is the last we shall hear from Diotima about ‘possession’...”

whereas the legacy of disinterestedness inclines us to erect a false alternative, quite alien to Plato's thinking, between admiring something and wishing *merely* to possess it, between, say, contemplating "the beauty of those trees under whose shade we rest" and desiring "nothing so much as to taste some delicious fruit of theirs,"²⁴ erotic desire for beauty overlays these attitudes on a continuum. As it should. In suitably complex cases, wanting to own a painting one finds beautiful, or more likely to take a photograph of it or buy a print from the gift-shop, does not contrast with but *expresses* and enable in future a proper appreciation. More to the point, young Socrates advances the insight that to find something beautiful, as Alexander Nehamas has sensitively argued, is to sense that it holds more than now meets the eye or ear or mind. One hopes, but may only hope, that this something more is worth getting closer to, understanding more richly, and making a part of one's life. This means: making it a *valuable* part of that life and, usually, making oneself vulnerable to being changed in yet unknown ways.²⁵ Such interaction may be remote from collecting property but not from something well termed 'owning' (becoming one's own, indeed, for Plato, becoming identified with one's ownmost nature). Hence, why Plato describes love so strikingly in terms of lack and completion and why its basic physical and emotional expressions should be to draw near, to embrace, to take in, to consume, 'to have and to hold.'

²⁴ Shaftesbury (1999 / 1711): III.ii, 2. This is not to say that Shaftesbury erects so rigid an opposition (hence, 'legacy'), but that the familiarity of this sort of example exerts tremendous influence: Obdrzalek supports her assumption that "a contemplative attitude differs sharply from a possessive one" by distinguishing sharply someone who appreciates a painting from "someone simply wishes to own them" ((2010): 432 n43). This 'simply' presumes too much, however.

²⁵ Nehamas (2007a): esp. 53-55 and (2007b): 104-8, 118-25.

It is worth mentioning briefly a second, connected charge. A deficit of the paradigm of disinterestedness is that, because it approaches beauty solely as an object of spectatorship, it tends to confuse the immediate appearance of beauty with a punctual impression. However, whether in its cultural home of aristocratic pederastic courtship or, reconfiguring this model of education, in Diotima's *scala amoris*, beauty inspires a temporally-extended, sustained interaction between lover and beloved.²⁶ It is an invitation to further and endless exploration. Importantly, Plato theorizes that this dynamic is *creative*, producing such valuable things as children, beautiful deeds, laws and institutions, knowledge, discourses and, ultimately, true virtue.²⁷ From this angle, Diotima's analogy between 'love' (*erōs*) and 'making' (*poiēsis*) does more than make the linguistic point that each term properly applies more widely than customary usage suggests (*Symp.* 205b8-d8). It conjoins these essentially mortal phenomena in the metaphysics of desire and the psychology of creativity. The scope of disinterestedness, however, cannot expose the facet of creativity to view because it does not approach beauty, as does Plato, primarily from the side of agency.

²⁶ Diotima emphasizes this ongoing, prospective feature even at what first looks to be the summation of loving beauty, remarking that one beginning to see the Form is "nearly" (σχεδόν, 211b6) able to grasp the final mystery. See for important to creativity here the sensitive remarks of Halperin (1985): 182. On Diotima's contestation of *paiderastia*, see Brisson (2006).

²⁷ Picture-taking synthesizes the appropriative and creative aspects of this response. Each spring passersby gather to take pictures of the majestic magnolia where I am writing, capturing the moment of its delicate pink and white blossoms poised to fall. It seems to me deeply appropriate that this longing should be saturated with shades of mortality and preservation with which Diotima colors the experience of beauty. And whatever the purchase of the idiom of taking pictures, the activity is a kind of making: images of the tree are not plucked like petals but produced, not unlike religious icons providing a share of some divine beauty. These are products of human agency, involving often careful ways of positioning oneself at a certain distance and angle, focusing sharpness, effecting certain contrasts of light and shadow, and so forth.

It is from the perspective of an agent pursuing beauty that we must understand young Socrates' perplexity and, specifically, why he cannot readily connect beauty with benefit and happiness. I have dwelled on the limitations of the tendency to associate the *kalon* with disinterestedness to make available a more comprehensive account of the complex relation between the *kalon* and the good in the *Symposium*. But as it shall require us to prioritize in the *kalon* certain stresses of the concept of beauty, this account shall also point the way to a rich ethical psychology of beauty.

§3 *The Opacity of Love*

If not to suggest that beauty should be conceived disinterestedly, why does Plato emphasize its psychological disconnect from benefit? My proposal is that young Socrates' perplexity dramatizes a thematic question of the dialogue, not merely *how* beauty is beneficial but *whether* beauty is an unalloyed good, unequivocally beneficial to human life.²⁸ The immediacy of beauty makes its pursuit a problem. Plato is often thought to deny this by assuming that beauty and the good are coextensive. Yet the psychological distinction between these two values, Plato emphasizes, raises the question from within the lived perspective of agents, whether their pursuits of beauty necessarily contribute or may fail to contribute to living a good and worthwhile life. This section shows how Diotima's partition of beauty and the good in the complex motivational structure of erotic desire accommodates and indeed answers to this

²⁸ Richardson Lear (2006b) valuably focuses the former issue, noting the possibility of the latter in passing (101 n7, 105 n12).

question. The following section shall examine how the introduction to beauty in the frame of the dialogue prepares the reader to take measure of the stakes of this question.

We observed that Diotima intends to correct Aristophanes' account by qualifying that erotic desire aims formally at the good in the sense of living well. Beauty remains its intentional object: lovers pursue their beloveds *as* beautiful or, in the case of non-rational animals, on account of some attractive perception of beauty. What is striking is that beauty occupies this role such that thoughts of benefit and happiness need not and do not readily arise. The phenomenological immediacy of beauty partly explains why. Its experience is characteristically too quick to calculate consequences, much less in the long term and overall. What remains to be shown is how the focus of erotic desire on beauty requires Diotima to introduce the good to make this form of motivation, and so much human agency, *intelligible*. Its apparent unintelligibility is a further resonance of young Socrates' perplexity about beautiful things. To see this, we need first to notice that Diotima preserves a feature of erotic desire highlighted by Aristophanes, that characteristically lovers cannot articulate what they so intensely desire.

Aristophanes' mythical lovers, we will recall, spend their lives searching for their other halves. Should they have the good fortune to find one another, these people "live out their lives together, *yet still cannot say* what they want to come to be for themselves from one another" (οἱ οὐδ' ἂν ἔχοιεν εἰπεῖν ὅτι βούλονται σφίσι παρ' ἀλλήλων γίγνεσθαι, 192c2-4). The joys of sex do not explain their delight. The depth of erotic desire is more obscure:

It is clear the soul wants something else *which it cannot say*, but divines and riddles darkly at what it wants. Suppose Hephaestus were standing over them lying together, and, with his tools, asking, 'What is it you humans want to come to be for yourselves from one another?'; and suppose, *being perplexed*, he would ask them again, 'Don't you desire this, to become joined together as closely as possible so as not to separate, day or night?'...

(Symp. 192c7-d8)

ἀλλ' ἄλλο τι βουλομένη ἐκατέρου ἢ ψυχὴ δῆλη ἐστίν, ὃ οὐ δύναται εἰπεῖν, ἀλλὰ μαντεύεται ὃ βούλεται, καὶ αἰνίττεται. καὶ εἰ αὐτοῖς ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ κατακειμένοις ἐπιστὰς ὁ Ἥφαιστος, ἔχων τὰ ὄργανα, ἔροιτο: τί ἔσθ' ὃ βούλεσθε, ὧ ἄνθρωποι, ὑμῖν παρ' ἀλλήλων γενέσθαι; καὶ εἰ ἀποροῦντας αὐτοὺς πάλιν ἔροιτο: ἄρ' αὖ γε τοῦδε ἐπιθυμεῖτε, ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ γενέσθαι ὅτι μάλιστα ἀλλήλοις, ὥστε καὶ νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν μὴ ἀπολείπεσθαι ἀλλήλων;

Supposing everyone would answer in the affirmative, the divine smith would satisfy the desire of lovers, according to Aristophanes, for what is familiar, one's own (τὸ οἰκεῖον, 193d2-3). Diotima's example of amputated limbs intends to show that while this account captures the insight that erotic desire requires a perceived lack in one's mortal nature (191a, 204a with 208ab), it is unsatisfactory "unless one calls the good what is one's own and the bad what is alien" (εἰ μὴ εἴ τις τὸ μὲν ἀγαθὸν οἰκεῖον καλεῖ καὶ ἑαυτοῦ τὸ δὲ κακὸν ἀλλότριον, 206e6-7). Rarely observed in this connection, however, is her tacit recognition that lovers do not typically *call* beloveds 'good.' It is not simply because lovers conceive beloveds under the description of beauty but because, in so doing, their aim is characteristically *inarticulate*, as young Socrates and Aristophanes' lovers demonstrate. Notice the deep accord between these moments: the latter are supposed perplexed (ἀποροῦντας) by the question of what they want to come to be from one another (τί ἔσθ' ὃ βούλεσθε... γενέσθαι); Socrates cannot say what shall be for someone to whom beautiful things come to be (γένηται τὰ καλά), abating his perplexity, *aporia*, when he can answer about good things "more resourcefully" (εὐπορώτερον, 205e1). To be sure, Aristophanes does not think beauty stirs this perplexity; he alone does not so much as mention the value. On my reconstruction, however, Diotima distinguishes beauty from the good partly in answer to it.

From this perspective, the need for Diotima to introduce the good suddenly into the discussion reinforces the point that, in erotic desire, what seems beautiful need not and characteristically does not show up as good. The latter is implicit, but only implicit, in its motivational structure, its *formal* aim rather than a part of its conscious experience. It is important to mind the psychological distinction between beauty and the good at this point because it reveals that Diotima *must* adduce the good (life) as the formal aim of erotic desire to make the range of pursuits it impels intelligible to ourselves; for reflecting on their lived experience, these pursuits can seem unintelligible. And this for two reasons – each of which corresponds to two conventional features of erotic desire, its arousal by beauty and its intensity.

The first reason we have already met. To have beautiful things is incomplete and quite perplexing as a final explanation of why one pursues someone or some course of action.²⁹ Compounding the perplexity is the manner in which beauty is pursued, correlative to the distinctive sort of motivation Diotima calls erotic. In its broad, technical sense, erotic desire motivates all *intense, long-term pursuits* of value. These pursuits reflect commitments that organize and give point to one's life. Athletics, business, and philosophy are paradigms (205d2-5); Diotima also discusses in this vein having and providing security for children (207b1-7) and achieving fame through lasting artistic and political accomplishment (208c-209e). She emphasizes, like Aristophanes, the intensity of these pursuits (ἡ σπουδή: 206b2, 208a6 with 192c7). Lovers are driven to extraordinary lengths by what attracts them as worth living for and, indeed, dying for, often putting themselves at great risk to personal security and well-being. Animals stricken

²⁹ This point is helped by Plato's characterization of the nature of beauty as resistant to articulation, most notably at *Symp.* 211a7, as Hyland (2008) has emphasized.

“terribly” by love (δεινῶς... νοσοῦντα, 207a7-b6) starve themselves to nurture their children or risk life and limb to protect them from harm; consider here a parent working several jobs to support a family. Through love of honour human beings, too, suffer “terribly” (δεινῶς, 208c4) to earn perpetual recognition by accomplishing great and beautiful feats in politics or art or athletics, for example. Following, if reanalyzing, descriptions of love in the poetic tradition, Diotima places her finger on the pulse of a lover in its throes, sensitive to its share of obsession and turmoil.³⁰

The salient point, reaffirming the adage that beautiful things are difficult, is that erotic pursuits are distinctly arduous and sacrificial, *not* easily construed as good-for the agent. It is therefore also on this score necessary and sufficient to explicate that erotic desire aims to acquire goods that make one happy. Sufficient, because it is taken as granted that everyone desires this end and that this desire explains without remainder why, for example, one trains several hours each day, regiments one’s sleep and diet, and sacrifices friendships in an effort to win an Olympic medal. Necessary, because otherwise erotic desire, and thus a significant swath of human agency, are incompletely explained, indeed inexplicable. This distinct kind of motivation threatens to seem fundamentally irrational, particularly if one is unable to state what its intensity is for. This worry evidently animates Diotima. Unless one thinks lovers seek, ultimately, the good in tandem with immortality, she claims, “you’d be amazed at their irrationality” (θαυμάζοις ἂν τῆς ἀλογίας, 208c4-5).

³⁰ Note, significantly, the use of δεινός for erotic desire at Soph. *Trach.* 476, Eur. *Hipp.* 28; more generally, *Il.* 3. 441-46, 14. 294-353; Soph. *Ant.* 781-8000; Eur. *Med.* 945-50. The epithet for Pandora, *kalon kakon* (Hes. *Theog.* 570) focuses in this connection the (gendered) thought that beauty is a destructive force. The negative face of erotic desire was, of course, raised earlier by Pausanias. It returns in the figure of Alcibiades, as Kraut (2008) shows. If the poetic tradition is free of romantic preconceptions about love, there is no need for Socrates/Diotima to offer interlocutors a more pessimistic account, as Obdrzalek (2010): 419-20 proposes.

This account of motivation, if correct, has profound consequences. It offers a sophisticated version of the thesis that desire occurs ‘under the guise of the good,’ according to which the thesis applies primarily to one’s life – that it go well – rather than primarily to individual actions in order to articulate a criterion of intelligibility for pursuits that look to be directed toward something else entirely.³¹ It seeks to make erotic desire intelligible to rational inquiry, moreover, while accentuating two interlocked insights into the richness of its experience. I mention them only briefly. The first is that beauty is essential to the structure of valuing, yet also recalcitrant to the inclination to flatten the evaluative landscape value into a thin notion of the good and its appearances. Beauty may on occasion be considered to ‘manifest the good,’³² but this we have seen should not be pressed too hard as a matter of phenomenology. Otherwise, experience would inform young Socrates straightaway that one loves the good in loving beauty. The second, which I have suggested is a corollary, is that the formal aim of erotic desire is characteristically *opaque* from a first-personal perspective. So long as one lacks philosophical virtue and knowledge of the natures of beauty and goodness – so long, in other words, that one is still *becoming* virtuous and wise –, one ordinarily pursues what seems beautiful while aiming *unbeknownst to oneself* at living well. Thus, while Diotima’s formal analysis may make erotic desire intelligible from a third-personal perspective, it can be seen to address and in some sense explain the puzzling

³¹ Whence the impression that the aim of erotic desire shifts to and from immortality as distinct from the good. But see Sheffield (2006): 82-94, 101-109 for a convincing defense of a single unified aim.

³² Cf. Bury (1932): *ad.* 201c, comparing the suggestion of this view at *Phil.* 64e-65a: “It might be near the truth to say that τὸ καλόν is neither less nor more than τὸ ἀγαθόν in its external aspect, ‘goodness’ as apprehended by the aesthetic faculty, or goodness qua attractive and soul-stirring.” Platonists such as Plotinus and Ficino gave this ‘manifestation’ a fulsome metaphysical gloss, taken up more recently and in also a psychological vein by, *e.g.*, Ferrari (1992): 266, Richardson Lear (2006a): 107-9, Sheffield (2006): 96, and Kosman (2010): 355.

phenomenon that, from a first-personal perspective, our most significant pursuits are blind to their aim.³³ Together these points imply that attractions to beauty propel much of what we do without our knowing why and without any security that these attractions lead in a direction which one judges good or beneficial to one's life as a whole and in the long run. A striking and perhaps necessary complement to familiar frameworks in philosophy of action and ethical psychology, Plato recognizes the risk and complexity of desire under the 'guise of the beautiful.'

§4 *Looking Good?*

We have seen Diotima move comfortably between and theoretically correlates the beautiful and the good. Perhaps she is secure in the conviction that these values are coextensive, if distinct. Nonetheless, we are evidently neither to presuppose this thesis of coextension in our interpretation of the dialogue as a whole nor to infer that Plato offers, or offers only, so unequivocally harmonious a picture. Our introduction to beauty is far more uncertain and problematical. The dialogue frame evokes yet puts into question the cheerful thought that what one finds beautiful must be beneficial.

The initial sighting of beauty – a veritable leitmotif of the dialogue – is most peculiar. Aristodemus, a follower and lover of Socrates, chances upon (ἐντυχεῖν) Socrates clad in fancy sandals, washed, oiled, preened (λελουμένον), rarities for this famously ugly man (ὀλιγάκις ἐποίει, *Symp.* 174a3-4; cf. 220b6). The sight must be especially surprising, and maybe not a little

³³ Contrast the assumption of one sophisticated account of the guise of the good which similarly understands a general conception of the good in light of a normative aim of intelligibility: "except for moments of insanity, my desires and wants seem to be always directed toward certain objects, projects, and aims whose point I can see" (Tenenbaum (2007): 28). Vogt (2017) offers a reorientation of the contemporary debate inspired by Plato and Aristotle. See especially ch. 6 for the fuller relevance of pursuits.

disheartening, to Aristodemus who too went unshod in the fashion of the philosopher. So it must be somewhere special, not the agora, that Socrates is going looking so good: or rather, let us be more careful, ‘having made himself so beautiful’ (οὕτω καλὸς γεγεννημένος). Doubly careful, in fact, so that we do not obscure Socrates’ suggestive reply: “To dinner at Agathon’s” (εἰς Ἀγάθωνος) – to *Goodman’s* – to celebrate his victory the day before.³⁴ Agathon, we will remember, is not only good, *agathos*, in name and noble birth but notoriously beautiful in appearance.³⁵ Socrates has beautified himself (ἐκαλλωπισάμην), he professes, “that I may go beautiful to someone beautiful” (ἵνα καλὸς παρὰ καλὸν ἴω, 174a5-8). Why this peculiar introduction?

Beckoned by the beauty of Agathon, Socrates makes himself beautiful to match. A natural explanation is that Socrates pretends to be attracted to Agathon as lover to beloved, *erastēs* to *erōmenos*. This comports with our and Socrates’ own image of the philosopher as a lover of the beautiful, but this very reason makes puzzling why Socrates feels the need to beautify himself. Surely he must dress respectably for this august gathering of gentlemen intelligentsia. Yet Socrates himself later emphasizes that lovers love what they lack. Strange, then, to find him already beautiful so as to approach the beautiful and, nominally, good. Moreover, it strains understanding why this or any philosopher be concerned with his or her looks, if by nature a

³⁴ At the Greater Dionysia, Plato suggests, it seems, to distance the event from the historical victory at the Lenaea in January 416 BCE (Ath. 217a): Sider (1980).

³⁵ Cf. *Prot.* 315e, where Socrates remarks Agathon’s handsome looks as an adolescent, which evidently remained in adulthood: Aristophanes lampoons the effeminacy of his youthfully beautiful features in *Thesmophoriazusae*, a joke on which the *Symposium* plays by styling a thirty-something Agathon, and having Agathon style himself, as a young, attractive, ‘soft’ *erōmenos*. Agathon, in effect, outdoes Aristophanes’ parody. See Hunter (2004): 77.

lover and not a beloved. An alternative explanation, then, is to reverse the direction of erotic interest. Perhaps Socrates figures himself the beloved of Agathon. Socrates would then go beautiful toward beautiful so that Agathon may do the same and actively pursue Socrates. The suggestion is not unreasonable, given what transpires. Agathon repeatedly bids Socrates to enter when he is deep in thought on a neighbour's porch and, upon arrival, to sit beside him so that, flirtatiously, he may lay his hands on (ἀπτόμενός) whatever wisdom Socrates acquired (*Symp.* 175c4-d2). Alcibiades may well be right to caution Agathon against falling, like he did himself, for this humiliating role reversal, becoming lover to Socrates as unyielding beloved (218c-219d, 222b3-5).

One lesson of this carefully staged ambiguity is that the erotics of beauty are more complicated and dynamic than can be captured by the practice of *paiderasteia* and its sexual ethics and politics of strict activity and passivity. That Socrates is figured as both ugly and beautiful, having beautified himself, further anticipates his own account of mortal nature in relation to beauty, neither altogether lacking nor altogether abundant and self-sufficient, as Aristophanes and Agathon respectively suggest. These are local concerns, however. The first words and presentation of Socrates contain still more abiding proposals about the problematic character of pursuing beauty.

The most pertinent point of this introduction is its deliberate but, to my knowledge, unexplored parallels to our target passage, *Symp.* 204e-205a. Notice, first, its linguistic parallel. Socrates suggests that beauty beckons and attracts and, less obviously, that in response one makes oneself or somehow becomes beautiful in turn, καλὸς γεγεννημένος. The phrase is significant. It points forward to the crucial question at 204e8, what will be for whom 'beautiful things come to

be,' γένηται τὰ καλά, if they become one's own. If beautifying *oneself* through fancy sandals and skin treatment exemplifies in primitive form the desire to make something beautiful 'one's own,' it also intimates the more complex process Diotima describes whereby a lover inspired by beauty makes herself more beautiful by producing beautiful discourses and ultimately, true virtue (*Symp.* 210a7, c1, d5, 212a3-5). More than this, however, the introduction and Diotima's substitution *prima facie* suggest, and performatively demonstrate, that this 'beautiful coming-to-be' leads toward the good.

And yet while Socrates *en route* to Agathon's embodies this central idea, he also complicates it. Strikingly, Socrates' beauty, as beautification, is presented as superficial – not to say *merely* superficial – a costume easily donned and doffed (γεγεννημένος, ἐκαλλωπισάμην), unindicative of his settled character (ὀλιγάκις ἐποίει). Put the man in respectable shoes but he still wanders off, as usual, and cannot do the decency of arriving on time to dinner! (*Symp.* 175bc). (Consider in this connection Agathon's gracious reply when Aristodemus shows up uninvited: "How nice (quite right? – *kalōs*) of you to come!" (174e12) Does Socrates arrive, in another respect, indecorously, *mē kalōs*?) If, by parity of going 'beautiful to beautiful,' the same superficiality holds of Agathon's beauty, Socrates deepens suspicion of its motivational power in the subtle way he extends his dinner invitation to Aristodemus.

The invitation is particularly significant, in a second parallel to *Symp.* 204e-205a, because it constitutes a *first* substitution of beauty by the good; but it is one which challenges any assurance of moving seamlessly from the former to the latter. Socrates enjoins Aristodemus to come along, going no longer as 'beautiful to beautiful' but as 'good men' going "unbidden to feasts of good men" (ἀγαθῶν ἐπὶ δαΐτας ἴασιν αὐτόματοι ἀγαθοί). Socrates claims to be

messing up (διαφθείρωμεν) a proverb that seems to state that good men go unbidden to feasts of their inferiors.³⁶ Whereas Homer allegedly abused this original proverb by inverting its status relations, having ‘soft spearman’ Menelaus (quoting *Il.* 17.587) attend Agamemnon’s feast uninvited, allegedly an inferior going to his superior’s (χείρω ὄντα ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ ἀμείνονος, *Symp.* 174b3-c5), Socrates puns on Agathon’s name to legitimate Aristodemus attending without invitation also feasts of *good* men. This Homeric ‘allusion’ conveys an important point and a philosophical problem. To hear in it, as we surely must, the original proverb, we must entertain at least the insinuation that Agathon may be inferior with respect to virtue, despite his name, noble birth, and beauty. The comparison is not lost on Aristodemus, who worries he is someone base (φαῦλος) going rudely to a man of wisdom and skill (σοφοῦ ἀνδρός, 174c7-8). But Aristodemus does not question Socrates’ fanciful misquotation, and he should. The garbling of the proverb shows the difficulty of determining who or what kind of life counts as good. It therefore raises the question what status beauty has in making this determination. Aristodemus does not ask this question. Plato suggests we must.

Why should Socrates raise concern over the attractive force and authority which Agathon’s beauty exerts? The worry is not the moralistic one we might have thought, that a

³⁶ Attested at Eupolis fr. 289. This basis is preferable to supposing that Socrates means solely to pun on Agathon’s name, in which case we should read Ἀγάθων for ἀγαθῶν, as Lachman conjectured, and take as original the altered version given above. The difficulty is that so slight a change would hardly ‘mess up’ (διαφθείρωμεν, 174b3) the original proverb and cannot explain how Homer allegedly went so far as to abuse it (ὑβρίσαι, b6). Readers may be intended to notice that Apollo (not Homer) insults Menelaus, quite unjustifiably, no fewer than fifteen books after Agamemnon’s feast; nor that Menelaus, though less kingly than his brother Agamemnon, too ranks among the *agathoi* and attends the feast unbidden because he senses his brother’s troubled mind (*Il.* 2.408-9). Bury (1932): *ad.* 174b and Rowe (1998): *ad.* 174b3-c5 set out the philological considerations clearly. Ferrari (2016) insightfully explores the theme of invitation, and its lack, throughout the dialogue.

handsome physique might conceal a vicious soul, still less that such appearance is *merely* superficial. The conjunction of these assumptions about beauty presumably animates the tendency to suppose that Plato represents Agathon as shallow and his speech as an “empty but magnificently constructed” rhetorical display,³⁷ as though affirming a damning truth in the historical Aristophanes’ caricature of Agathon: “One can’t help making things like one’s own nature” (*Thesm.* 167). How Plato construes the experience of beauty, however, belies the network of dichotomies between bodily and psychic beauty, ‘outer’ and ‘inner’, style and substance, and appearance and reality that inflect this reception of Agathon. Beauty is for Plato always a matter of *appearance*, manifest in though not exhausted by what shows itself. This matters to reinforce that psychological and ethical qualities are revealed in the ‘look’ of a face, gesture, posture, or stride. Agathon himself registers this insight. When praising the beauty of Erōs’ in careful distinction from its virtue (κάλλος: *Symp.* 195a-196b; ἀρετή: 196b-197b), he does privilege beauty ‘in’ bodies, including soft texture and the bloom of youth, as somehow different from that in soul (καὶ σώματι καὶ ψυχῇ, 196b1). Yet the expression of beauty in delicacy (ἡ ἀπαλότης) and gracefulness (ἡ εὐσχημοσύνη) are meant to cut across and indeed *connect* physical and psychic attributes, as these characteristics permeate souls and manifest themselves in action and character (195d6-196b3), much as Socrates observes at *Republic* 3, 401–412.

³⁷ So, Brisson (2006): 245. Rowe (1998): 161-173 consistently fails to find any of the professed seriousness in Agathon’s speech because he sees “a picture of someone who has a distinctly uncertain relationship with anything resembling the truth” (*ad.* 197e7-8n), indeed “no interest in the truth” (*ad.* 199c5-204c8). See for a similar assessment Scott and Welton (2008): 72-81. The tide seems fortunately to be turning. For Sedley (2006), Agathon represents a “sufficiently Socratic (or Platonic) voice” (52); Belfiore (2012): 136-37 even-handedly remarks that Agathon can best learn from Socratic philosophizing, Sheffield (2006): 35-37 and Blondell (2006): 170 that Socrates finds Agathon worthy of intellectual discussion. See now Gonzalez (2017) for a comprehensive reinterpretation of the speech.

Moreover, Socrates' philosophical practice reveals his qualified commitment to the same insight. It is tempting to assume that he would be committed to a (self-) conception of beauty along the dichotomy imagined by Alcibiades, an ugly satyr-like exterior concealing the 'inner beauty' of divine statues within (216d-217a). It is worth remarking not only that this violent image comes from someone preoccupied with his own bodily beauty and its sociopolitical benefits, but also that, contrary to his point, Alcibiades assumes that Socrates' moderate and courageous *actions* visibly manifest his beautiful soul (217b-d, 220de). More to the point is that we find Socrates congenitally attracted to the "supermodels of Athenian culture," as Ruby Blondell nicely puts it ((2006): 167), on the conventional aristocratic assumption that their beauty betrays a splendid character or its promise.³⁸ On this model, personal beauty – not quite the beauty 'of body' *in contrast* to 'soul' – indicates noble status (being *gennaios*, putatively *kalos kagathos*) and, particularly for youths, the *promise* of becoming a virtuous and authoritative citizen, befitting the entitlements and expectations of his class. This makes a case like that of Homer's Paris, whose beauty fails to manifest the courage appropriate to his standing as an *agathos*, anomalous. Socrates, of course, criticizes the aristocratic scheme of values and its conceit that social status determines what is beautiful, not least by prioritizing the worth and pursuit of beautiful wisdom (e.g., *Prot.* 319bc, *Tht.* 143e). However, it is from within this scheme, forefront in the context of the symposium, that he engages these well-born lads in scrutiny of their evaluative concepts,

³⁸ *Charm.* 154de speaks of needing to 'undress the soul' of Charmides before looking at the beauty of his body but notice that Socrates remarks well his beautiful body and desires, erotically, to examine his character because that body shows signs of maturity: Charmides looks old enough to want to have intellectual discussion. Cf. also, again, *Prot.* 315e: Agathon's beautiful looks bear the sign of a *kalos kagathos* nature.

hopefully to ignite a philosophical pursuit of what it truly means to be beautiful and good. His practice profoundly understands the superficiality of beauty.

The ambivalence announced by Agathon's beauty turns rather on the specific reason Aristodemus esteems him so highly, as expert or wise, *sophos*. Agathon's looks and prestige are inseparably a function of his beautiful poetry, taken in cultural context to be a manifestation of wisdom.³⁹ Agathon is an emblem, in effect, of the more general difficulty that beautiful poetry reflects and constructs the evaluative appearances of an entire culture. Witness Phaedrus. He draws his conception of what it is to live and act beautifully, and thus to flourish (καλῶς βιώσεσθαι, *Symp.* 178c6; καλὰ ἔργα ἐξεργάζεσθαι, d4) from the poetic tradition into which he was acculturated. His ideals of Homeric heroism capture some of the importance of beauty to forming salutary senses of shame and honour, and so the ethical importance of desiring admiration (178cd, 180b; cf. 194c, 208cd, 209c-e), a social psychology developed at *Rep.* 2-4. Yet his uncritical acceptance of these ideals highlights the first ethical problem for Plato of training desire onto a conception of beauty which promotes a genuinely flourishing life. We paper over the ethical, epistemic, and sociopolitical aspects of this problem, however, if we marginalize the beauty of Agathon or his poetry as *merely* superficial.⁴⁰ To the extent Socrates invites criticism of

³⁹ As, for example, at *Pi.* O.14.5-7: the Graces help any man who is "skillful, beautiful, and splendid" (εἰ σοφός, εἰ καλός, εἴ τις ἀγλαὸς ἀνὴρ) deliver sweet and delightful poetry. The term *kalos* seems to unite Pindar's triad: being *kalos* is a matter of producing admirable poetry, which reveals skill (σοφός) and earns renown (ἀγλαός).

⁴⁰ If the superficiality of beauty implies a contrast with depth, it is best understood not as 'outer' to 'inner' but in terms of more or less sustained, searching, and sensitive encounters. This is always a dynamic of appearances, the way our beloveds seem now and into the future, and how their looks change as we learn how to see. Excellent discussions of beauty in this regard, inspired by Plato, may be found in Nehamas (2007a) and Murdoch (1970).

Agathon, Plato asks us to take seriously how the experience of beauty becomes culturally constructed and manipulated, sometimes perniciously.

So we find it with Aristodemus, eager to visit Agathon because he considers him wise, but failing, it seems, to distinguish Agathon from Socrates in this regard. This failure marks the historical fact, which cannot be forgotten, that the terms of *sophia* and *philosophia* are ambiguous and constantly contested, so that Socrates – and Plato – must appropriate these honourific terms to demarcate his intellectual enterprise from and elevate it above those of his contemporary rivals.⁴¹ Beauty has special importance in this connection as a manifestation of wisdom. For this reason, Socrates must caution against the ethical significance that accrues to Agathon's beauty. He self-deprecatingly contrasts his meagre (φάυλη) wisdom with the abundance of beautiful wisdom (πολλῆς καὶ καλῆς σοφίας, *Symp.* 175e2-3) which Agathon displayed in his poetic victory, mocking Agathon and the terms of baseness and wisdom Aristodemus used to praise him. Agathon is wise, at least, to the joke ('Why, you rude...': ὕβριστης εἶ'), and the symposium becomes a contest of wisdom (e8-10).⁴² In this context, Socrates' reaction to the undeniable beauty of Agathon's encomium acquires special poignancy.

Significantly, Socrates emphasizes how "beautifully and magnificently" (καλῶς καὶ μεγαλοπρεπῶς, 199d1) Agathon speaks to contest the conventional terms on which Agathon's poetry seems authoritative about what is true and good. So "beautiful and varied a speech"

⁴¹ On the contested concept of *sophia*, see Kerferd (1978), Martin (1998) and Kurke (2010). Nehamas (1990) and Nightingale (1995): ch. 1 remain stimulating accounts of Plato within this context.

⁴² See, still, Bacon (1959) on the theme of contest. Socrates and Agathon are its two principal competitors, both considered experts on love by Erixymachus (*Symp.* 193e5-8) and both crowned victorious by Alcibiades in the garb of Dionysus (213a-e). Plato clearly invites us to take Agathon more seriously than have a large balance of recent scholars.

(καλὸν οὕτω καὶ παντοδαπὸν λόγον), with its breathless peroration full of poetic metres in Gorgianic style, is certainly awesome (θαυμαστά): anyone would be “struck senseless (ἐξεπλάγη) by the beauty (τοῦ κάλλους) of the words and phrases” (198b2-5). Socrates claims to have foreseen, perhaps gesturing forward to 204e, that the beauty of Agathon’s speech would leave him at a loss (ἀπορεῖν, b2) to deliver his own, as he cannot produce a speech nearly as beautiful (οὐδ’ ἐγγύς τούτων οὐδὲν καλὸν εἰπεῖν, c1). But then he turns the tables. Socrates denies what in his view the earlier speakers and particularly Agathon presume, that to praise something beautifully (καλῶς, e1, 199a3) or well (εὖ ἐρῶν, 198d6-7) is to attribute it the greatest and most beautiful characteristics, regardless of the truth of the matter.

This strategy denies neither that Agathon speaks beautifully nor truly. It exploits a pre-theoretical association of beauty, *kallos* and *to kalon*, with superficiality and the possibility of deception, exploiting in other words a conceptual distinction between beauty and truth which intersects with its distinction from the good. These distinctions may be parasitic upon expectations that these values are intimately connected, as in cultural attitudes toward gorgeous aristocratic lads (beauty manifests goodness) or mesmerizing poets (beauty manifests truth and/or being). But their very possibility allows Socrates to insist that however much beautiful speech may seem to contain truths about important matters, it does not necessarily arise from a concern to speak only the most beautiful *truths* in the most attractive way, as an encomium should (*Symp.* 198d4-6). This is to establish a criterion of beautiful speech subordinate to truth. By this criterion, previous speakers have merely seemed to praise Erōs by making it appear, at least to those who are ignorant, most beautiful and best (198e3-199a3) when, upon examination, it is neither (201bc). The telling point is that this criterion aims to undermine Agathon, not a little

unfairly,⁴³ to secure a competing conception of wisdom and, in turn, beauty, truth, and the good life. If we were to presume this conception from the first, we could see neither the need for scrutiny of what seems beautiful nor the need to articulate and defend, as Socrates will, a distinctly ‘philosophical’ pursuit of knowledge of the nature of beauty and its expression in virtue.⁴⁴ To follow the dramatic action and progression of thought of the dialogue, then, we must remain sensitive to the threatening possibility Plato lays bare that what seems beautiful may not be (or seem) good and may misdirect one’s pursuit of a good life. The threat only grows in force because the persuasive power of beauty makes it difficult, if not incoherent, to ask from within its experience whether what *seems* beautiful is *in fact* so, much less true and productive of the good. As if to reinforce the issue, after Agathon admits to ignorance, Socrates replies pointedly, “And yet you spoke so beautifully” (καὶ μὴν καλῶς γε εἶπες, 201c1).

The peculiar introduction to beauty, and its complicated relation to the good, issues the same philosophical problem intimated by young Socrates’ puzzlement and preserved by Diotima’s account of the complex structure of erotic desire. Lovers pursue what strike them as beautiful, aiming to live well. Can they have any guarantee of hitting their target?

Diotima plausibly suggests that at a certain point they do. Although her prescription of how to love correctly does not directly invoke the good and instead continues to focus on the

⁴³ The examination of Agathon is not a little casuistic: Agathon should object that Erōs’ lack of beauty does not imply that it is *in no way* beautiful (μηδαμῇ, *Symp.* 201b6), as Hyland (2008): 44 observes. More substantially, Agathon introduces chief insights of Socrates’ speech. He makes thematic how loving beauty produces good things and the importance of producing beautiful things in a beautiful environment (*Symp.* 196e2-197b9), recognizing dimly that the creative activity of erotic desire makes one happy.

⁴⁴ This point marks a limit to the objection against Agathon that his conception of *sophia* as skill or excellence in *technē* is ‘unphilosophical’ (Sedley (2006): 62).

overwhelming phenomenology of beauty, by coming to love what is more truly beautiful one comes to understand that it is so and why it is so. Arguably, one is led from loving bodies to souls, from souls to laws and practices, from practices to knowledges, and thereupon to communion with Beauty itself by realizing that the beauty of the latter cases explains ontologically that of the former cases. Systematic knowledge creates admirable political institutions which themselves form beautiful characters. If so, one would seem to learn at the higher reaches of this curriculum that what is most truly beautiful is so because it is good, because it promotes human flourishing. This would mean that the self-opacity and, in turn, insecurity that her account ascribes to lovers would dissolve to the extent that they make epistemic and ethical progress. It does not mean, however, that her account answers to the ways in which human agency is typically obscure and risky.

This explanatory priority might seem to reduce how ambivalent the pursuit of beauty could be. One might object that if beauty makes sensible, attractive, and enviable a certain conception of human flourishing, as Phaedrus illustrates, then even if its experience is independent of thoughts about benefit, there should be no question as to the desirability of beauty. As Frisbee Sheffield emphasizes ((2006): 94-99), Diotima assumes that what one finds beautiful and which order of beauty one pursues, psychic or corporeal, expresses one's values and ultimately some conception of a good life. If wisdom is central to that conception, for example, Socrates might seem eminently beautiful and interacting with him most conducive to achieving happiness. This is true, but this approach does not solve and merely displaces the worry. This is because it gets the matter backwards. The problem lies in the order of discovery, exactly reverse to the order of explanation: a conception of beauty leads the way in imagining

what constitutes a good life in the first place. In this vicinity there is precious little choice.⁴⁵ Not only does one first conceive of how to live on the basis of beautiful images which circulate a culture, which one admires and aspires to emulate, as Phaedrus illustrates as well. Nor is it sufficient to notice that, because perception and evaluation tend to replicate themselves along lines Sheffield suggests, this initial pattern becomes especially difficult to uproot. There is also the following complication, which helps to explain how the psychological distinction between beauty and the good contributes to Plato's philosophical project in general.

Plato invests the experience of beauty, the *kalon* and *kallos*, with the *unique* ability to disrupt or reorganize one's way of life, as we began to explore toward the end of the previous chapter. The conviction is that beauty manifests something somehow valuable which, on occasion, is not and cannot be conceived squarely within one's settled framework of ends. Plato often presents this idea by exploiting a link between beauty and divinity: beauty of this order manifests a divine presence in the human realm.⁴⁶ If a particularly vivid instance of this pattern of thought comes from Socrates' palinode in the *Phaedrus* of an awestruck recollection of the Beautiful Itself and its structure of visual wonder, which we examined, another instance may be seen, though less forcefully, in Diotima's proposal that all lovers pursue manifestations of this divine and immutable 'form,' whether or not they are dimly aware of this (*Symp.* 210e5-211b5, d3-e4). More down-to-earth, however, is the remarkably acute but admittedly suspect self-

⁴⁵ A point potentially obscured by the voluntaristic slant of the thought that "one chooses certain kinds of beauty" for the sake of one's "chosen good end" (Sheffield (2006): 98, 95).

⁴⁶ See further Richardson Lear (2006b): 114-19, although I am not inclined to agree that with the proposal that, for Diotima, the *phenomenological experience* of beauty is necessarily of this manner, if in diminished forms, or that this experience causes all lovers to reevaluate their lives in this way.

diagnosis of Alcibiades, for whom Socrates seems to play this role of divine harbinger. The wondrously divine sight and words of Socrates make Alcibiades feel ashamed that his life of political ambition is not worth living (θεῖα... πάγκαλα, 216e8-217a1; θειοτάτους, 222a2). Now Alcibiades wants to become as good as possible by spending his life with this strange and singular man (215e-16c, 218cd). Notice that the immediacy of beauty enters here, too. In this role, beauty strikes suddenly from without, appearing all at once out of nowhere (ἐξαίφνης ἀναφαίνεσθαι, 213c1). It compels and redirects attention. It does not require but precludes determinations of whether or how beauty fits one's ends, not because this posture is disinterested but because it is receptive. Yet, of course, it motivates: and in its motivation one pursues *something* of value, it seems, but not something *yet* conceived in terms of the good. The point is to make psychological space for beauty to unsettle what one imagines that to be.

By the time we reach young Socrates' *aporia*, then, Plato has presented to us two ideas which push in opposite directions but which he insists we hold together in the balance of our ethical psychology. One is the idea that some conception of beauty leads the way in how one conceives of and attempts to live a good and happy life. The other is the idea that the phenomenology of beauty can come apart, for better or for worse, from the psychological consideration and apprehension of what is good or the good. These twin ideas push in opposite directions. Yet their pressures can be compounded if one appreciates the point from which we have seen Plato's use of the *kalon* is oriented and to which it returns, that social practices organized by the concept of the *kalon* significantly shape what one learns to perceive and pursue as beautiful, including the beautiful appearance for oneself and one's deeds before the eyes of others. From this point begins a series of reflections that lead one to ask whether one pursues

what is not indeed beautiful or good. Yet if reflection itself will not dislodge the continued attractions of whatever, after all, does *seem* beautiful, if the task is to change these seemings through the sort of cultural critique and reorientation we analyzed with regard the heroic ideal of beauty and *poikilia*, then it will still be possible and meaningful to wonder – and to worry – whether the pursuit of what seems beautiful necessarily benefits, even if it seems characteristically to do so. I have tried to show in this chapter that, rather than seamlessly correlate or identify the *kalon* and the good, Plato emphasizes the psychological distinction between these values in the structure of erotic desire to make space for precisely this question, to unravel its stakes, and to impress its urgency. No wonder young Socrates cannot say what comes of loving beautiful things: if the endless task of learning to live well cannot but begin from the experience of what seems beautiful and follow its lead, this task must remain, appropriately, uncertain, ambivalent, and risky.

We similarly began from and followed the lead of the difficulty of finding our way about the concept of the *kalon*. We traced this difficulty to a modern tendency to insist on borders between aesthetic, social, and ethical aspects of the concept that Plato evidently did not think to draw. A central aim of this study has been to ease this difficulty by showing the concept at work in its historical and cultural contexts. By analyzing the interdependence between these dimensions and according dimensions of beauty due priority, we may confront more squarely some of our contemporary anxieties about beauty with which this interpretive difficulty is interlocked. It will not do, of course, simply to conjure a less fraught or conflicted and more positive conception of beauty, certainly not if the argument of this final chapter is cogent and its bearing on beauty significant. There is more work to be done, to till the soil of a harsher reality if

our concept of beauty is again to become fruitful. To the extent, then, that rejuvenating the connection of beauty to the Platonic concept of the *kalon* has served that end, it marks the need for another beginning.

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